



in the early part of the eighteenth century, a Manchester manufacturer who should place a pint of foreign wine before his guests, exposed himself to the remarks and headshakings of all his neighbours. Before the rise of machinery, a manufacturer's evening expenditure at the public house where they all met, never exceeded 6d. for a glass of punch and a penny for a screw of tobacco. It was not till 1758, and this marks an epoch, that a person actually engaged in business was seen with an equipage of his own. The fourth period, comprising the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, "is that in which expense and luxury have made great progress, and was supported by a trade extended by means of riders and factors through every part of Europe".<sup>1</sup> What would our worthy doctor say if he could rise from his grave and see Manchester as it is to-day?

Accumulate! Accumulate! That is Moses and all the prophets! "Industry furnishes the material which saving accumulates."<sup>2</sup> Therefore you must save, you must save; you must reconvert the largest possible proportion of surplus value or surplus product into capital. Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake, this was the formula by which the classical political economists gave expression to the historical mission of the bourgeois period. They were under no illusions as to the labour pains attendant upon the birth of wealth,<sup>3</sup> but what is the use of deploring historical necessity? If to the classical economists the proletarian is but a machine for the production of surplus value, to the same school the capitalist is only a machine for the transformation of this surplus value into additional capital. These economists take the historical function of the capitalist in dead earnest. In the early twenties of the nineteenth century, Malthus, wishing to free the capitalist from the distressing internal conflict between the longing for enjoyment and the impulse toward enrichment, proposed a division of labour, which would assign to the capitalist

<sup>1</sup> *Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles round Manchester*, London, 1795, pp. 182 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, Book III, Chap. III.

<sup>3</sup> Even J. B. Say declares: "The savings of the rich are made at the cost of the poor."—Here are Sismondi's words: "The Roman proletarian lived almost entirely at the expense of society. . . . It can almost be said that modern society lives at the expense of the proletarians, on what it keeps out of the remuneration of labour." *Études, etc.*, vol. I, p. 24.

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SCIENCE

CAPITAL BY KARL MARX  
VOLUME II. WITH AN INTRO-  
DUCTION BY G. D. H. COLE

Coalminers and other miners are among the best paid members of the British proletariat. The cost in life, health, and limb at which they buy their wages has been shown earlier in this book.<sup>1</sup> Here I shall be content to give a cursory glance at their housing conditions. As a rule the exploiter of the mine, whether he be the owner thereof or merely rents it from the owner, erects a number of cottages for his hands. They receive cottages, and coal for their own use, "for nothing"; this, of course, meaning that cottages and coal form part of their wages paid in kind. The miners who are not lodged in such a way receive, in lieu thereof, £4 per annum. The mining districts quickly attract a large population, consisting in part of the actual miners, and in part of the handicraftsmen, shopkeepers, etc., who are grouped round them. As always happens when the population is thick upon the ground, ground-rents are high. The exploiter of the mine, therefore, makes it his aim to build within the smallest possible space at the mouth of the pit just so many cottages as his hands and their families can be squeezed into. If new mines are opened in the neighbourhood, or if disused ones come into use again, the pressure increases. In the building of the cottages, the only thing that counts is the "abstinence" of the capitalist from all expenditure that can possibly be avoided. "The lodging which is obtained by the pitmen and other labourers connected with the collieries of Northumberland and Durham", says Dr. Julian Hunter, "is perhaps, on the whole, the worst and the dearest of which any large specimens can be found in England, the similar parishes of Monmouthshire excepted. . . . The extreme badness is in the high number of men found in one room, in the smallness of the ground-plot on which a great number of houses are thrust, the want of

dwelling and occupied by labourers and others employed in the construction of a railway now in course of construction through that neighbourhood. The excavations are small and damp, and have no drains or privies about them, and not the slightest means of ventilation except up a hole pulled through the top, and used for a chimney. In consequence of this defect, smallpox has been raging for some time, and some deaths [amongst the cave dwellers] have been caused by them." *Op. cit.*, p. 18, note 2.

<sup>1</sup> The details given at the end of Part Four refer especially to coalminers. With regard to conditions in metal mines, which are even worse, see the scrupulously accurate report of the Royal Commission of 1864.



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921,174 persons. The farms in categories (4), (5), and (6), farms ranging from 15 to 100 acres, are, as English experience long since showed, too small for capitalist wheat-growing, and are practically out of the question for sheep-farming. On the same supposition as before, therefore, we shall have an additional 788,761 candidates for emigration. This gives us a total of 1,709,532. Since appetite grows with eating, Lord Rent-Roll will soon discover that Ireland, with a population of three and a half millions, is still poverty-stricken, that she is poverty-stricken because she is overpopulated, and that her depopulation must be carried even further if she is to fulfil her true mission—that of being a sheep-walk and a cattle-pasture for England.<sup>1</sup>

Like all good things in this world, so profitable a method has its drawbacks. While rents accumulate in Ireland, the Irish accumulate with equal speed in America. The Irish-

\* In Book Three of the present work I shall show in fuller detail how the famine and its consequences have been deliberately turned to the best account alike by individual landlords and by the English legislature, in order to carry out the agricultural revolution by forcible measures, and to thin the Irish population to an extent satisfactory to the landlords. There, likewise, I shall return to the question of the conditions under which the small farmers and the agricultural labourers live and toil. At present one more quotation will suffice. Nassau W. Senior, in the posthumous work *Journals, Conversations, and Essays relating to Ireland*, 2 vols., London, 1868, vol. II, p. 282, writes: " 'Well,' said Dr. G., 'we have got our Poor Law, and it is a great instrument for giving the victory to the landlords. Another, and a still more powerful instrument is emigration. . . . No friend to Ireland can wish the war to be prolonged [the war between the landlords and the small farmers]—still less, that it should end by the victory of the tenants. The sooner it is over—the sooner Ireland becomes a grazing country, with a comparatively thin population which a grazing country requires, the better for all classes.' "—The English Corn Laws of 1815 gave Ireland a monopoly of free export of grain to Great Britain. Thus they artificially favoured the cultivation of grain. In 1846, the monopoly was suddenly done away with when the Corn Laws were repealed. Apart from other conditions, this would alone have sufficed to give a powerful impetus to the transformation of Irish arable into pasture, to the concentration of farms, and to the driving of the lesser peasantry off the land. Whereas between 1815 and 1846 it was the fashion to extol the fertility of Irish soil, and to declare that Ireland was foreordained by nature for the cultivation of wheat, after 1846 English agricultural experts, economists, and politicians suddenly discovered that the Emerald Isle was only fit for the production of fodder! Monsieur Léonce de Lavergne has been in a great hurry to spread the news on the other side of the Channel. No one but a "serious-minded" man of the Lavergne calibre could be fooled by such nonsense.



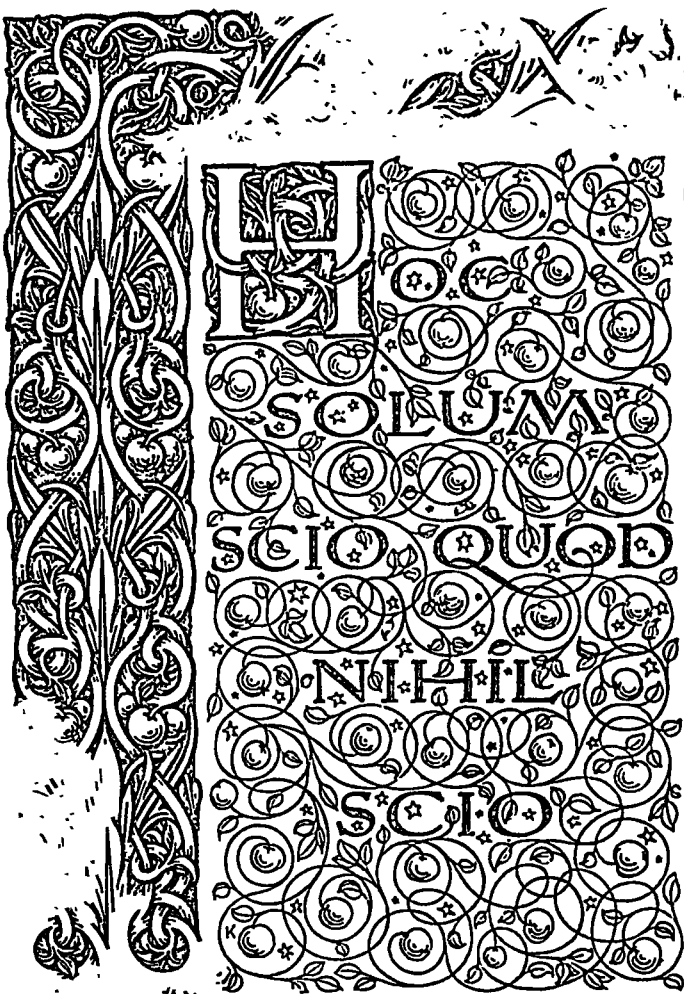
Under James I, any person wandering about and begging was declared a rogue and a vagabond. Justices of the peace in petty sessions were authorised to have such offenders publicly whipped, with, in addition, six months' imprisonment for the first offence, and two years' for the second. While in prison they were to be whipped as much and as often as the justices of the peace thought fit. Incurable and dangerous rogues were to be branded on the left shoulder with an R, and were to be set to hard labour; if caught begging again, they were to be executed without mercy. These statutes remained in force till the beginning of the eighteenth century, when they were repealed by 12 Anne, cap. 23.

Similar laws were enacted in France, a country where, in the middle of the seventeenth century, a "kingdom of vagabonds" (*royaume des truands*) had been established in Paris. As late as the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI, by the ordinance of July 13, 1777, it was prescribed that every man in good health from 16 to 60 years of age, if without means of subsistence and not practising a trade, was to be sent to the galleys. Of like nature are the statute of Charles V for the Netherlands, dated October 1537; the first edict of the States and Towns of Holland, dated March 19, 1614; the "plakaat" of the United Provinces, dated June 26, 1649; etc.

Thus was the agricultural population—forcibly expropriated from the soil, driven from home, coerced into vagrancy, and then whipped, branded, and tortured by grotesque and terrible laws—constrained to accept the discipline required by the wage system.

It does not suffice that the conditions rendering labour

in the reign of Henry VIII. Holinshed, *Chronicles of England*, vol. I, p. 186.—In Elizabeth's time, "rogues were trussed up apace, and that there was not one year commonly wherein three or four hundred were not devoured and eaten up by the gallows". Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion, and other various Occurrences in the Church of England during Queen Elizabeth's happy Reign*, second edition, 1725, vol. II.—According to this same Strype, in Somersetshire, in one year, 40 persons were executed, 35 robbers branded in the hand, 37 whipped, and 183 discharged as "incurable vagabonds". Nevertheless, he is of opinion that this large number of prisoners does not comprise even a fifth of the actual criminals, "thanks to the negligence of the justices and the foolish compassion of the people"; and "the other counties of England were not better off in this respect than Somersetshire; some were even worse".



common lands, etc., enabled him to effect a notable augmentation of his stock of cattle almost without cost, and the cattle provided him with abundant manure for the enrichment of his arable land.

In the sixteenth century, a decisive factor was super-added. In those days, farming leases were for long terms, often for ninety-nine years. The continued fall in the value of the precious metals, and therefore in the value of money, bore golden fruit for the farmer. The depreciation of the currency reinforced the before-mentioned causes of a fall in wages. Part of what had been wages, therefore, now came to supplement the profits of the farm. The persistent rise in the price of grain, wool, meat, and, in a word, all agricultural produce, increased the money capital of the farmer without any action on his part, while the rent he had to pay, being measured in the depreciated currency, steadily fell.<sup>1</sup> Thus the farmer was enriched at the expense

end of his term, if he have not six or seven years' rent lying by him, fifty or a hundred pounds, yet will the farmer think his gains very small."

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the effect of the depreciation of money, during the sixteenth century, on the different classes of society, consult *A Compendious or Brief Examination of Certain Ordinary Complaints of Diverse of our Countrymen in these our Days*, by W.S., Gentleman, London, 1581. This work is written in dialogue, and for that reason, as well as because of the initials, it was for a very long time ascribed to Shakespeare. As late as 1751 it was published under the dramatist's name. The actual author was William Stafford. In one place the knight reasons as follows: Knight: "You, my neighbour, the husbandman, you, Master Mercer, and you Goodman Cooper, with other artificers, may save yourselves metely well. For as much as all things are dearer than they were, so much do you arise in the price of your wares and occupations that ye sell again. But we have nothing to sell whereby we might advance the price thereof, to countervail those things that we must buy again." In another place, the knight asks the doctor: "I pray you, what be those sorts that ye mean. And, first, of those that ye think should have no loss thereby?" Doctor: "I mean all those that live by buying and selling, for, as they buy dear, they sell thereafter." Knight: "What is the next sort that ye say would win by it?" Doctor: "Marry, all such as have takings or farms in their own manurance [cultivation] at the old rent, for where they pay after the old rate they sell after the new—that is, they pay for their land good cheap, and sell all things growing thereon dear." Knight: "What sort is that which ye said should have greater loss hereby, than these men had profit?" Doctor: "It is all noblemen, gentlemen, and all others that live either by a stinted [fixed] rent or stipend or do not manure [cultivate] the ground, or do occupy no buying or selling."

# CAPITAL

2 (A Critique of  
Political Economy)

By KARL MARX

*Translated from the  
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by Eden & Cedar Paul.*

2 Volume Two 2



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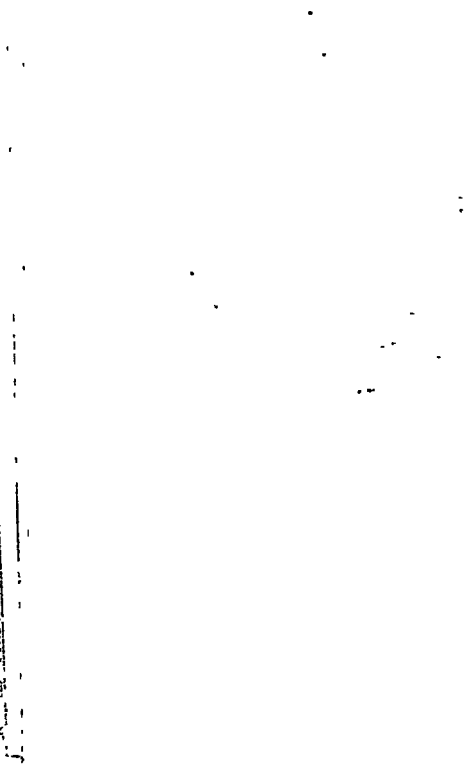
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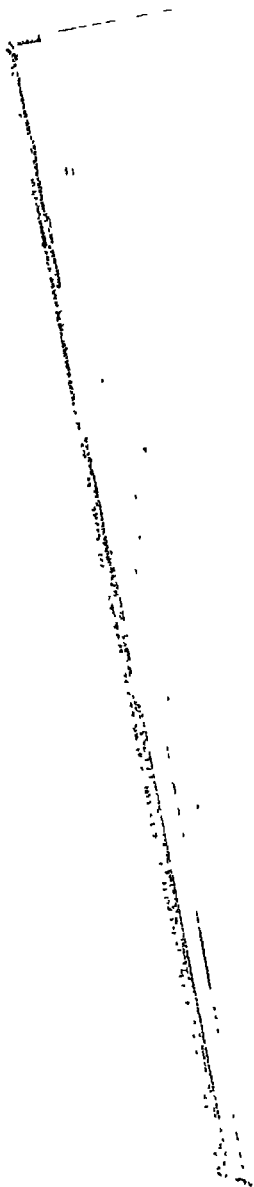
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## PART FIVE

# PRODUCTION OF ABSOLUTE SURPLUS VALUE AND OF RELATIVE SURPLUS VALUE



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE SURPLUS VALUE

WE began by considering the labour process (cf. Chapter Five) abstractly, independently of its historical forms, as a process going on between man and nature. We said there: "If we regard the whole labour process from the outlook of its result, the product, then both the means of labour and the object of labour assume the aspect of means of production, and labour itself assumes the aspect of productive labour." In a note to the foregoing passage, we amplified as follows: "This way of defining productive labour, of defining it from the outlook of the labour process alone, is by no means adequate for the capitalist form of production." The matter must be further developed here.

In so far as the labour process is a purely individual one, the worker unites in himself all the functions which subsequently become separated. In the individual appropriation of natural objects for his own life purposes, he manages his own affairs. Subsequently he passes under the control of others. The individual human being cannot work upon nature except through the activity of his own muscles, under the control of his own brain. Just as in the system of nature, head and hand belong to one another, so in the labour process mental work and manual work are united. Subsequently they become separated, and even to such an extent as to be deadly foes. Speaking generally, the product is metamorphosed from the direct product of an individual producer into a social product, into the joint product of a collective worker, that is to say of a combined labour personnel, whose individual elements are approximated in varying degrees to the manipulation of the object of labour. As the cooperative character of the labour process expands, there necessarily occurs a corresponding expansion in the concept of productive labour and that of the person who performs it, the productive worker. To work productively, it is no longer necessary that the worker should be one who puts his own hand to the work; enough that he should be an organ of the collective worker, fulfilling one of that

collective worker's subordinate functions. The foregoing primary definition of productive work, deduced from the very nature of material production, remains permanently true for the collective worker, regarded as a totality. But it is no longer true for the elements of that worker, taken collectively.

On the other hand, however, the concept of productive work grows narrower. Capitalist production is not merely production of commodities, but something more. Essentially, it is the production of surplus value. The worker does not produce for himself, but for capital. No longer, therefore, does it suffice that he should simply produce. He must produce surplus value. Only that worker is now "productive" who produces surplus value for the capitalist, and thus promotes the self-expansion of capital. If I may be permitted to give an example drawn from another sphere than that of material production, a schoolmaster is a productive worker when, in addition to working in order to improve the intelligence of his scholars, he slaves to enrich the school proprietor! Whether the owner of capital invests it in a school or in a sausage factory, does not alter the essential point. The concept of the productive worker, therefore, does not merely imply a relation between work and useful effect, between the worker and the product of his labour; but also a specific social relation of production, a relation that has come into existence through a historical process, and one thanks to which the worker is characterised as the direct means for promoting the self-expansion of capital. To be a productive worker, therefore, is not a piece of good luck, but a misfortune. In Book Four of this work, in which the history of the theory of surplus value will be discussed, we shall see more clearly that classical political economy has always regarded the production of surplus value as the distinctive characteristic of the productive worker. Its definition of the productive worker, therefore, varies with its conception of the nature of surplus value. Thus the physiocrats declare that agricultural work is the only kind of productive work; for this, they consider, is the only kind of work that produces surplus value. For them, surplus value exists only in the form of land-rent.

A prolongation of the working day beyond the time during which the worker was producing no more than an equivalent for the value of his labour power, and the appro-



priation of this surplus value by capital—this is the production of absolute surplus value. It forms the general foundation of the capitalist system, and the starting-point of the production of relative surplus value. The latter presupposes that the working day is already divided into two portions, necessary labour and surplus labour. In order to increase the period of surplus labour, the period of necessary labour is shortened by means which enable the equivalent of the wage of labour to be produced in a shorter time. The production of absolute surplus value depends only upon the length of the working day; the production of relative surplus value revolutionises out and out the technical processes of labour and the way in which society is subdivided into groups.

It therefore presupposes a specifically capitalist mode of production, a mode which, along with its methods, means, and conditions, develops spontaneously upon the foundation that is constituted by the formal subjection of labour to capital. In the course of this development, what was a formal subjection of labour to capital becomes an actual subjection.

It will be enough to refer cursorily to certain intermediate forms, in which surplus labour is not extracted from the producer by direct compulsion, and in which the producer has not as yet been formally subjected to capital. In these instances, capital has not yet gained direct control of the labour process. Beside the independent producers, who practise handicrafts or till the soil in accordance with traditional methods, stands the usurer or the merchant with his usurer's capital or merchant's capital, feeding upon the producers like a parasite. The predominance of this form of exploitation in any society excludes the existence of the capitalist method of production, although it may form the transition to that method, as happened in the latter part of the Middle Ages. Finally, as the example of modern domestic industry shows, certain transitional forms may be reproduced here and there upon the background of large-scale industry, although in a greatly modified aspect. The purely formal subjection of labour to capital suffices for the production of absolute surplus value; for instance, it is enough that handicraftsmen who used to work on their own account, or as apprentices of a master, should become wage workers under the direct control of a capitalist. But

we see, on the other hand, that the methods of producing relative surplus value are, at the same time, methods of producing absolute surplus value. Indeed, the excessive prolongation of the working day would seem to be the most characteristic product of large-scale industry. Generally speaking, the specifically capitalist method of production ceases to be a mere means for the production of relative surplus value, as soon as that method has conquered an entire branch of production; and, still more so, as soon as it has conquered all the important branches of production. It then becomes the general, socially dominant form of the productive process. As a special method for the production of relative surplus value it remains effective, first, only in so far as it seizes upon industries that were previously subject to capital in a purely formal sense, in so far, therefore, as it extends its domain; secondly, only in so far as the industries that it has taken over, continue to be revolutionised by changes in the methods of production.

From one point of view, the distinction between absolute surplus value and relative surplus value seems illusory. Relative surplus value is absolute, for it conditions an absolute prolongation of the working day beyond the amount of working time necessary to supply the worker with subsistence. Absolute surplus value is relative, for it conditions a development of productivity that will allow of the necessary labour time being confined to one portion of the working day. But if we keep in view the movement of surplus value, this semblance of identity disappears. As soon as the capitalist method of production has been thoroughly established and has become the general method of production, the distinction between absolute surplus value and relative surplus value makes itself felt whenever there is a question of increasing the rate of surplus value. Assuming that labour power is paid at its value, we are then faced by the following alternatives: either, the productivity of labour and its normal intensity remaining unchanged, the rate of surplus value can only be increased by an absolute prolongation of the working day; or else, the length of the working day being fixed, the rate of surplus value can only be increased by a change in the relative magnitudes of its constituents, necessary labour and surplus labour—and this, unless wages are to fall below the value of labour power, implies a change in the productivity or the intensity of labour.

If the worker needs the whole of his working time in order to produce the means of subsistence necessary for himself and his family, he has no time left over in which to carry on unpaid labour for some other person. Until labour has reached a certain level of productivity, the worker has no time available beyond what is requisite for producing subsistence; and without such superfluous time there can be no surplus labour and therefore no capitalists. It is equally true, that in such circumstances there can be no slave owners, and no feudal barons. In a word, there can be no proprietary class.<sup>1</sup>

We can, therefore, say that there is a natural foundation for surplus value, but only in the very general sense that there is no natural obstacle in the way of any one who should propose to shuffle off on to another the burden of the necessary labour for the maintenance of his own existence—any more than there is a natural hindrance in the way of one who should propose to nourish himself by consuming another human being's flesh.<sup>2</sup> The productivity of labour is a natural development, and there is nothing mysterious about the matter, though here and there people are inclined to make a mystery of it. It is not until human beings have raised themselves above the level of the animals from which they have sprung, and not until their labour has been to a certain extent socialised, that conditions arise in which the surplus labour of one can become another's means of subsistence. In the early beginnings of civilisation, the productivity of labour is small; but at this time, too, human wants are scanty, for these wants only develop to an extent proportional to the development of means for their satisfaction. Furthermore, in those early days, the proportion of the members of society who live by means of others' labour is infinitesimally small as compared with the general mass of direct producers. But as the social productivity of labour increases, this proportion grows both absolutely and relatively.<sup>3</sup> The relation which makes capital a possibility

<sup>1</sup> "The very existence of the master capitalists, as a distinct class, is dependent on the productiveness of industry." Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 206.—"If each man's labour were but enough to produce his own food, there could be no property." Ravenstone, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> According to a recent calculation, in the parts of the world hitherto explored, there are at least 4,000,000 cannibals.

<sup>3</sup> "Among the wild Indians in America, almost everything is the labourer's, 99 parts of a hundred are to be put upon the account

arises, moreover, upon an economic foundation which is itself the product of a long evolutionary process. The now extant productivity of labour, which is the presupposition of capital, is not the gift of nature but the outcome of a history lasting thousands of centuries.

Apart from the degree of development of social production, the productivity of labour is dependent upon natural conditions. These conditions are all referable to the "nature" of human beings (race, etc.), and to the "nature" which forms man's environment. As regards the latter, external natural conditions may be classified, from the politico-economic outlook, under two main heads: natural wealth in the means of subsistence, this signifying a fertile soil, waters teeming with fish, etc.; and natural wealth in the means of labour, such as waterfalls, navigable rivers, timber, ores, coal, etc. In the early days of civilisation, natural wealth of the former kind is of decisive importance; in higher phases of social development, natural wealth of the latter kind is of decisive importance. For instance, compare England with Hindustan; or, in the world of classical days, compare Athens and Corinth with the countries bordering the Black Sea.

The smaller the number of natural wants imperatively demanding satisfaction, and the greater the natural fertility of the soil and the more favourable the climate, the smaller is the amount of necessary labour required for the maintenance and reproduction of the producer. The greater, therefore, can be the ratio between the producer's labour for others and his labour in his own behalf. Diodorus wrote concerning the ancient Egyptians: "It is quite incredible how little trouble and expense the bringing up of their children causes them. They cook for them the first and the simplest food that comes to hand; they also give them the lower part of the papyrus stem to eat, so far as it can be roasted in the fire; and the roots and stalks of marsh plants, partly raw, and partly boiled and roasted. Most of the children wear no shoes, and go naked, for the air is so mild. Hence a child until he is grown up costs his parents no more, on the whole, than twenty drachmas. That is the main reason why in Egypt the population is so numerous, and why, therefore, so many great works of labour. In England, perhaps, the labourer has not  $\frac{1}{3}$ ." *The Advantages of the East Indian Trade*, etc., p. 73.

can be undertaken.”<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the great building enterprises of the ancient Egyptians were rendered possible, not so much by the numerical size of the population of the country, as by the fact that so large a proportion of the population was disposable. Just as the individual worker can hand over more surplus labour in proportion as the amount of necessary labour time is small, so the smaller the part of the working population essential to the production of necessary means of subsistence, the greater is the part of that working population available for other activities.

Assuming the existence of capitalist production, supposing that in other respects the conditions remain unchanged, and that the working day is of constant length, the amount of surplus labour will vary with the natural conditions under which the work is performed, and in especial with the fertility of the soil. But the converse does not follow. It is nowise true that the most fertile soil is the one best suited for the development of the capitalist method of production. The development of that method presupposes man's control of nature. Where nature is too lavish, she “keeps him in her hand, like a child in leading strings”. When nature is bountiful, the fuller development of human faculties is no longer essential.<sup>2</sup> The motherland of capital is not the tropics, where vegetation is over-luxuriant, but the temperate zone. It is not the absolute fertility of the soil but the multifariousness of its natural products which constitutes the natural foundation of the social division of labour, and, by changing the natural conditions of his environment, spurs man on to multiply his own needs, capacities, means of labour, and methods of labour. The need for the social

<sup>1</sup> Diodorus, *op. cit.*, lib. I, cap. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Natural wealth “as it is most noble and advantageous, so doth it make the people careless, proud, and given to all excesses”; whereas artificial wealth “enforceth vigilancy, literature, arts, and policy”. *England's Treasure by Foreign Trade, or the Balance of our Foreign Trade is the Rule of our Treasure*, written by Thomas Mun of London, merchant, and now published for the common good by his son John Mun, London, 1669, pp. 181-182.—“Nor can I conceive a greater curse upon a body of people, than to be thrown upon a spot of land, where the productions for subsistence and food were, in great measure, spontaneous, and the climate required or admitted little care for raiment or covering. . . . There may be an extreme on the other side. A soil incapable of produce by labour is quite as bad as a soil that produces plentifully without any labour.” *An Inquiry into the Present High Price of Provisions*, London, 1767, p. 10.

control of a natural force, the need for economising it, appropriating it on a large scale, or taming it, the need for doing these things by the work of human hands, plays the most decisive part in the history of industry. Take, as an instance, hydraulic works in Egypt, Lombardy, Holland, etc.<sup>1</sup> Irrigation in India, Persia, etc., is another instance. There, irrigation by means of artificial canals not only supplies the soil with the water indispensable to it, but also carries down to it, in the shape of sediment from the hills, mineral fertilisers. The secret of the flourishing state of industry in Spain and Sicily under Arab rule was to be found in irrigation works.<sup>2</sup>

Favourable natural conditions, however, provide merely the possibility for the existence of surplus labour, that is to say of surplus value or surplus product. They do not suffice to make this actual. The fact that labour is carried on under different natural conditions in different places has this result, that the same quantity of labour in various countries satisfies various amounts of human wants,<sup>3</sup> so

<sup>1</sup> It was the need for being able to predict the rise and the fall of the waters of the Nile, which led to the study of astronomy in ancient Egypt, and thus established the dominion of the priestly caste as director of agriculture. "The solstice is the time of the year when the rise of the Nile begins, and this is the period which the Egyptians have found it necessary to watch with the closest attention. . . . It was this tropical year which they needed to chronicle, in order to guide their agricultural operations. They had, therefore, to discover in the skies an obvious sign of its return." Cuvier, *Discours sur les révolutions du globe*, Hoefer, Paris, 1863, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> In Hindustan, one of the material foundations of the power exercised by the State over the small and disconnected productive organisms of the country, has always been the regulation of the water supply. The Mohammedan rulers of India understood this better than do their English successors. Suffice it to recall the famine of 1866, when more than a million Hindus perished of starvation in the district of Orissa, in the Bengal Presidency.

<sup>3</sup> "There are no two countries which furnish an equal number of the necessities of life in equal plenty, and with the same quantity of labour. Men's wants increase or diminish with the severity or temperateness of the climate they live in; consequently the proportion of trade which the inhabitants of different countries are obliged to carry on through necessity cannot be the same, nor is it practicable to ascertain the degree of variation farther than by the degrees of heat and cold; from whence one may make this general conclusion, that the quantity of labour required for a certain number of people is greatest in cold climates, and least in hot ones; for in the former, men not only want more clothes, but the earth more cultivating than in the latter." *An Essay on the Governing Causes of the Natural*

that, other things being equal, the amount of necessary labour time varies from place to place. These conditions affect surplus labour only as natural limitations, that is to say by fixing the point at which labour for others can begin. As industry develops, this point is pushed back. In western European society, where the worker can only obtain permission to work for his own existence on condition that he provides surplus labour, it is easy to fall into the mistake of believing that the provision of a surplus product is an inborn quality of human labour.<sup>1</sup> Let us turn, however, to consider an inhabitant of the eastern islands of the Asiatic archipelago where sago grows wild in the forests. "When the inhabitants have convinced themselves, by boring a hole in the tree, that the pith is ripe, the trunk is cut down and divided into several pieces, the pith is extracted, mixed with water, and filtered; it is then fit for use as sago. Ordinarily, a single tree yields 300 lbs.; and it may yield as much as 500 or 600. People there go into the forest and cut bread for themselves, just as with us people cut firewood."<sup>2</sup> Let us suppose that such an eastern bread-cutter needs to work only twelve hours a week in order to satisfy all his wants. Nature's direct gift to him is plenty of leisure. Before he can use that leisure for his own advantage productively, a whole series of historical conditions must have ripened; and before he can turn it to account as the expenditure of surplus labour on behalf of others, compulsion will be necessary. If capitalist production were introduced, the good fellow would perhaps have to work for six days a week in order to procure for himself the product of one working day. The bounty of nature does not explain why, in that case, he should have to work for six days a week, or why he should have to hand over five days' surplus labour. All that it explains is why his necessary labour is restricted to one day in each week. Whatever happens, we have no right to say that his surplus

*Rate of Interest*, London, 1750, p. 60.—The author of this epoch-making work, published anonymously, was J. Massey. Hume took his theory of interest from it.

<sup>1</sup> "Labour must always leave a surplus." Thus writes Proudhon, who seems to fancy that this, too, is one of the rights and duties of the citizen!

<sup>2</sup> F. Shouw, *Die Erde, die Pflanze, und der Mensch*, second edition, Leipzig, 1854, p. 148.

product is the outcome of some occult quality inherent in human labour.

The historically developed social productivity of labour, and also the natural productivity of labour, take on the semblance of being the productivity of the capital with which that labour is incorporated.

Ricardo never troubles to enquire into the origin of surplus value. He discusses surplus value as if it were something inherent in the capitalist method of production, which in his eyes is the natural form of social production. When he speaks of the productivity of labour, he seeks in it, not the cause of the existence of surplus value, but only the cause which determines the magnitude of surplus value. On the other hand, his school has loudly proclaimed that the productivity of labour is the generating cause of profit (read, surplus value). Certainly this marks an advance as compared with the mercantilists, who held that the excess of the price of products over their costs of production arose out of exchange, and came into existence because the products were sold above their value. Nevertheless, even the Ricardian school has evaded the problem instead of solving it. The truth is that these bourgeois economists were warned by a sound instinct that to probe too deeply into the burning question of the origin of surplus value would be extremely dangerous. But what are we to think when we find that John Stuart Mill, half a century after Ricardo, solemnly proclaims his own superiority over the mercantilists when he is simply repeating the lazy quibbles of the vulgarisers of Ricardo's doctrine?

Mill writes: "The cause of profit is that labour produces more than is required for its support." So far, he is only harping on the old string, but he wishes to add something original, so he goes on to say: "To vary the form of the theorem; the reason why capital yields a profit, is because food, clothing, materials, and tools, last longer than the time which was required to produce them." He here confounds the duration of labour time with the lastingness of the products of labour. According to this view, a master baker, whose products last only one day, could never extract from his wage workers as much profit as can the owner of a machinemaking works, whose products endure for twenty years or more. Of course, this much is true that birds would have to do without nests,



if a nest did not last longer than the time it takes in building!

Having established this fundamental truth, Mill proceeds to establish his own superiority over the mercantilists: "We thus see that profit arises, not from the incident of exchange, but from the productive power of labour; and the general profit of the country is always what the productive power of labour makes it, whether any exchange takes place or not. If there were no division of employments, there would be no buying or selling, but there would still be profit." For Mill, then, exchange, buying and selling, the general conditions of capitalist production, are but an incident; and there would always be profits even though there should be neither purchase nor sale of labour power!

"If", he continues, "the labourers of the country collectively produce 20 % more than their wages, profits will be 20 %, whatever prices may or may not be." This is a fine example of tautology; for if workers produce a surplus value of 20 % for the capitalists who employ them, the ratio between the profits and the total wages of the workers will be 20:100. Furthermore, it is absolutely false to say that "profits will be 20 %". They will always be less, for profits are calculated upon the sum total of the capital outlay. If, therefore, the outlay on capital be £500, of which £400 has been spent upon means of production, and £100 upon the wages of labour, and if the rate of surplus value be, as assumed, 20 %, then the rate of profit will be 20:500—which is 4 % and not 20 %.

Now we come to a splendid example of the way in which Mill deals with the various historical forms of social production: "I assume, throughout, the state of things which, where the labourers and capitalists are separate classes, prevails, with few exceptions, universally; namely that the capitalist advances the whole expenses, including the entire remuneration of the labourer." He must be the victim of a strange optical illusion to see everywhere a state of affairs which as yet can be found on our earth only in exceptional instances! Well, let us go on. Mill is good enough to admit, "that he should do so is not a matter of inherent necessity". On the contrary, he writes: "The labourer might wait, until the production is complete, for all that part of his wages which exceeds mere necessities; and even for the whole, if he has funds in hand sufficient for his temporary

support. But in the latter case, the labourer is to that extent really a capitalist in the concern, by supplying a portion of the funds necessary for carrying it on." Mill might just as well say that the worker, who advances not only the necessities of life but also the means of labour, is in reality his own wage worker. With equal justice he might say that the American peasant proprietor is his own slave, a slave who works for himself instead of for a master.

After Mill has thus clearly proved that capitalist production would always exist even if it did not, he is consistent enough to prove that it does not exist even when it exists: "And even in the former case" [when the workman is a wage labourer to whom the capitalist advances all the necessities of life], "he" [the labourer] "may be looked upon in the same light" [in the same light as a capitalist], "since, contributing his labour at less than the market price" [!], "he may be regarded as lending the difference" [?] "to his employer and receiving it back with interest."<sup>1</sup> In the real world, the worker advances his work to the capitalist for a week, in order to receive the market price of his labour power at the end of the week; and he goes on doing this week after week. This, says Mill, transforms him into a capitalist! On a level plain, mere mounds look like hills. We can measure the imbecile flatness of the modern bourgeoisie by the altitudes its "great intellects" can reach.

<sup>1</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, London, 1868, pp. 252-253, et passim.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### CHANGES OF MAGNITUDE IN THE PRICE OF LABOUR POWER AND IN SURPLUS VALUE

THE value of labour power is determined by the value of the necessaries of life habitually required by the average worker. Although the form of these necessaries may vary from time to time, the quantity of them is known at a particular epoch and in a particular society, and may therefore be treated as a constant magnitude. What varies is the value of this quantity. Two additional factors play their part in deciding the value of labour power. One is the cost of evolving this power, a cost which varies as the mode of production varies; the other is the natural diversity of the labour power, the question whether it is male or female, mature or immature (whether it is the labour of children, young persons, or adults). The use of these different kinds of labour power (a use which is determined by the method of production) makes a great difference in the cost of reproducing the working-class family and in the value of the labour power of the adult male worker. These two last-mentioned factors are, however, left out of account in the following investigation.

I assume: 1. that commodities are sold at their value; 2. that the price of labour power, though it may occasionally rise above its value, never sinks below that value.

On these assumptions, we have seen that the relative magnitudes of surplus value and of the price of labour power are determined by three circumstances: 1. the length of the working day, or the extensive magnitude of labour; 2. the normal intensity of labour, or its intensive magnitude, so that a specified quantity of labour is expended in a specified time; 3. the productivity of the labour in accordance with which a specified quantity of labour yields, in a specified time, a greater or a smaller quantity of product, the quantity depending on the degree of development of the conditions of production. It is obvious that very different combinations are possible; according as one of the three factors is constant, while two are variable; or as two of the

factors are constant and one of them variable; or as all three of them are simultaneously variable. The number of these combinations is augmented by the fact that, when these factors simultaneously vary, the magnitude and the direction of the respective variations may differ. In what follows, only the chief combinations are considered.

# I. LENGTH OF WORKING DAY AND INTENSITY OF LABOUR ARE CONSTANT; PRODUCTIVITY OF LABOUR IS VARIABLE.

On these assumptions, the value of labour power and the magnitude of surplus value are determined by three laws.

A. A working day of given length always creates the same amount of value, no matter how much the productivity of labour, and, with it, the mass of the product, and the price of each single commodity produced, may vary.

If the value created by a working day of 12 hours be, let us say, 6s., then, although the quantity of the use-values produced varies with the productivity of labour, the value of 6s. is merely spread over a greater or a smaller number of commodities.

B. Surplus value and the value of labour power vary inversely. A change in the productivity of labour, its increase or its decrease as the case may be, gives rise to an opposed variation in the value of labour power, and to a like variation in surplus value.

The value created by a working day of 12 hours is a constant quantity, say 6s. This constant quantity is equal to the sum of the surplus value plus the value of the labour power, which latter value the labourer replaces by an equivalent. It is self-evident that when a constant quantity consists of two parts, one of these parts cannot increase unless the other diminishes. The value of the labour power cannot rise from 3s. to 4s., unless the surplus value falls from 3s. to 2s.; and the surplus value cannot rise from 3s. to 4s. unless the value of the labour power falls from 3s. to 2s. In these circumstances, therefore, no change in the absolute magnitude, either of the surplus value or of the value of the labour power, can occur without a simultaneous change in their relative magnitudes—in the ratio between the magnitude of the one and the magnitude of the other. The two magnitudes cannot possibly rise or fall simultaneously.

Further, the value of the labour power cannot fall, and

consequently the surplus value cannot rise, unless there is an increase in the productivity of labour. For instance, in the foregoing case, the value of the labour power cannot fall from 3s. to 2s., unless an increased productivity of labour makes it possible to produce in 4 hours the quantity of the means of subsistence which formerly required 6 hours for its production. Conversely, the value of the labour power cannot increase from 3s. to 4s., unless the productivity of labour falls, so that 8 hours are required for the production of a given quantity of the means of subsistence which formerly could be produced in 6 hours. It follows from these considerations that an increase in the productivity of labour reduces the value of labour power and therewith increases surplus value; whereas a decline in the productivity of labour increases the value of labour power and reduces surplus value.

When formulating this law, Ricardo overlooked one circumstance. Although the change in the magnitude of surplus value or of surplus labour gives rise to an inverse change in the magnitude of the value of labour power or in that of the necessary labour, it by no means follows that they vary in the same proportion. They do increase or diminish by the same quantity. But their proportional increase or decrease depends on their original magnitudes, before the change in the productivity of labour took place. If the value of the labour power was 4s., or if the necessary labour time was 8 hours, if the surplus value was 2s., or the surplus labour 4 hours, and if, in consequence of an increase in the productivity of labour, the value of the labour power now falls to 3s., or the necessary labour to 6 hours—the surplus value will rise to 3s., or the surplus labour to 6 hours. The same quantity 1s., or 2 hours, is added in one case and subtracted in the other. But the proportional change in magnitude is different in the two cases. Whilst the value of the labour power falls from 4s. to 3s., that is by  $\frac{1}{4}$  or 25 %, the surplus value rises from 2s. to 3s., that is by  $\frac{1}{2}$  or 50 %. It follows, therefore, that the proportional increase or decrease in surplus value consequent on a given change in the productivity of labour, depends on the original magnitude of that portion of the working day which has embodied itself in surplus value; the smaller that portion, the greater the proportional change; the greater that portion, the less the proportional change.

C. Increase or diminution of surplus value is always the result of, and never the cause of, the corresponding decrease or increase in the value of labour power.\*

Since the working day is of a constant magnitude, and is represented by a value of constant magnitude; since to every change in the magnitude of surplus value there corresponds an inverse change in the magnitude of the value of labour power; and since the value of labour power can only change concomitantly with the change in the productivity of labour—it is plain that under these conditions every change in the magnitude of surplus value must arise out of an inverse change in the magnitude of the value of labour power. If then, as we have already seen, there can be no change of absolute magnitude in the value of labour power and no change in surplus value unaccompanied by a change in their relative magnitudes, it follows that no change in their relative magnitudes is possible without a previous change in the absolute magnitude of the value of labour power.

According to the third law, a change in the magnitude of surplus value presupposes a change in the value of labour power, which latter change is brought about by a change in the productivity of labour. The limit of the change is given by the altered value of labour power. Nevertheless, even when circumstances allow the law to operate, subsidiary movements may occur. If, for instance, in consequence of the increased productivity of labour, the value of labour power should fall from 4s. to 3s., or if the necessary labour time should fall from 8 hours to 6, the price of labour power could only fall to 3s. 8d., 3s. 6d., 3s. 2d., and so on, and the surplus value, consequently, could not rise above 3s. 4d., 3s. 6d., 3s. 10d., and so on. The amount of this

\* To this third law, McCulloch and others have made the absurd addition, that a rise in surplus value unaccompanied by a fall in the value of labour power may occur through the abolition of taxes payable by the capitalist. The abolition of such taxes makes no change whatever in the quantity of the surplus value which the industrial capitalist primarily extorts from the worker. It merely alters the proportion in which that surplus value is divided between himself and third persons. It consequently makes no difference whatever in the ratio between surplus value and the value of labour power. McCulloch's exception therefore only proves his misunderstanding of the law—a misfortune that often occurs to him when he is popularising Ricardo, just as a like misfortune often happens to J. B. Say when he is popularising Adam Smith.

decline, the lowest limit of which is 3s. (the new value of labour power), depends on the relative weight which the pressure of capital on the one hand, and the resistance of the workers on the other, can throw into the scale.

The value of labour power is determined by the value of a definite quantity of the means of subsistence. What changes concomitantly with the changes in the productivity of labour is the value of these means of subsistence, not their quantity. It is, however, possible that, owing to an increase in productivity of labour, both the worker and the capitalist may simultaneously be able to appropriate a greater quantity of these necessities, without any change in the price of labour power or in surplus value. If the original value of labour power be 3s., and if the necessary labour time be 6 hours, if the surplus value likewise be 3s., and the surplus labour 6 hours—then, if the productivity of labour be doubled without altering the ratio of necessary labour to surplus labour, there will be no change of magnitude in surplus value and the price of labour power. The only result will be that each of them will represent twice as many use-values as before; these use-values being twice as cheap as before. Although there will be no change in the price of labour power, the price will now be above its value. If, however, the price of labour power had fallen, not to 1s. 6d. (the lowest possible figure consistent with its new value), but to 2s. 10d., 2s. 6d., and so on, this lower price would still represent an increasing quantity of the necessities of life. Thus it is possible, when the productivity of labour is increasing, for the price of labour power to keep on falling, and yet for this fall to be accompanied by a constant growth in the quantity of the worker's means of subsistence. Relatively, however, when the value of the labour power is compared with surplus value, there is a constant fall in the ratio between them, so that the gulf between the position of the worker and that of the capitalist continually widens.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "When an alteration takes place in the productiveness of industry, and that either more or less is produced by a given quantity of labour and capital, the proportion of wages may obviously vary, whilst the quantity, which that proportion represents, remains the same, or the quantity may vary whilst the proportion remains the same." *Outlines of Political Economy* (anonymous), London, 1832, p. 67.

Ricardo was the first who accurately formulated the three laws above given. There are, however, certain errors in his formulation. First of all, he looks upon the particular conditions under which these laws hold good as the self-evident, general, and exclusive conditions of capitalist production. He recognises no change, either in the length of the working day, or in the intensity of labour, so that, for him, there can be only one variable factor, the productivity of labour. Secondly (and this error vitiates his analysis far more seriously), he has not, any more than other economists, ever studied surplus value in and by itself, that is independently of its special forms, such as profit, land-rent, etc. He therefore lumps the laws concerning the rate of surplus value with the laws of the rate of profit. As I have already said, the rate of profit is the ratio between the surplus value and the total outlay of capital, whereas the rate of surplus value is the ratio between the surplus value and the variable part of this capital. Let us assume that a capital  $C$  of £500 is made up of raw material, instruments of labour, etc., to the amount of £400, or  $c$ ; and of wages to the amount of £100, or  $v$ ; and, further, that the surplus value is £100, or  $s$ . Then we have a rate of surplus value  $\frac{s}{v} = \frac{£100}{£100} = 100\%$ . But the rate of profit  $\frac{s}{C} = \frac{£100}{£500} = 20\%$ .

It is, moreover, obvious that the rate of profit may depend on circumstances that in no way affect the rate of surplus value. I shall show in Book Three that, with a given rate of surplus value, we may have any number of rates of profit; and that various rates of surplus value may, under given conditions, find expression in one and the same rate of profit.

## 2. LENGTH OF WORKING DAY AND PRODUCTIVITY OF LABOUR ARE CONSTANT; INTENSITY OF LABOUR IS VARIABLE.

Increasing intensity of labour implies that there is an increased expenditure of labour in a given period of time. Consequently, a more intensive working day is embodied in a larger quantity of products than is a less intensive working day of the same number of hours. Or, if the working day be of the same length, it gives rise to more products when the productivity is greater. In the latter case, however,



the value of the individual product diminishes, since it costs less labour than before. In the former case, the value of the individual product remains unchanged, seeing that now, as before, the product costs the same amount of labour. Here, the number of products is increased without any fall in their price. As their number increases, the total amount of their price increases too; whereas, in the other case, the same total amount of value is represented only by an increased quantity of products. Thus, when the number of working hours remains the same, the more intensive working day is embodied in a product of higher gross value; this meaning, when the value of money remains unchanged, that it is embodied in more money. The value created varies concomitantly with variations in the degree to which the intensity of labour varies from the social norm. Consequently, the same working day is not represented, as it was before, by a constant, but by a variable amount of created value. For instance, a more intensive 12-hour day may be represented by 7s. or 8s., instead of by 6s., as it would be if it were a 12-hour day of customary intensity. It is obvious that if the value created by one day's labour increases from, say, 6s. to 8s., then the two parts into which this value is divided (namely, price of labour power, and surplus value) may both of them increase simultaneously and either equally or unequally. The price of labour power, on the one hand, and of surplus value, on the other, can both increase simultaneously from 3s. to 4s. when the amount of value created increases from 6s. to 8s. Here the rise in the price of labour power does not necessarily mean that the price of labour power has risen above its value. On the contrary, the rise in price may be accompanied by a fall in value. This always happens when the rise in the price of labour power is not sufficient to compensate for the increased wear and tear of labour power.

We know that, with transient exceptions, a change in the productivity of labour only brings about a change in the magnitude of the value of labour power, and therefore in the magnitude of surplus value, when the products of the branch of industry with which we are concerned form part of the ordinary everyday consumption of the worker. But, in the present case, this condition no longer applies. For no matter whether the change in the magnitude of the labour be extensive or intensive, there corresponds to this

change in magnitude a change in the magnitude of the value created, irrespective of the nature of the article in which that value is embodied. Should the intensity of labour increase simultaneously and to the same degree in all branches of industry, then the new and higher degree of intensity would become the social norm for the society concerned, and would thus cease to count as an extensive magnitude. But still, even then, the intensity of labour would be different in different countries, and would therefore influence the application of the law of value to the working days that prevailed in the respective countries. The more intense working day in one country would be represented by a greater sum of money than the less intense working day in another country.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. PRODUCTIVITY AND INTENSITY OF LABOUR ARE CONSTANT; LENGTH OF WORKING DAY IS VARIABLE.

The working day can vary in either of two directions. It may become longer or shorter.

A. The productivity and intensity of labour remaining unchanged, a reduction in the length of the working day leaves the value of labour power and therefore the necessary labour time unchanged. It reduces surplus labour and surplus value. With the fall in the absolute magnitude of surplus value, there is associated a fall in its relative magnitude, that is to say its magnitude in relation to the value of labour power, which here remains unaltered. The only way in which the capitalist could indemnify himself would be by forcing the price of labour power down below its value.

All the customary arguments against a reduction in the working day are based upon the assumption that this reduction takes place under the conditions now being considered; whereas, in reality, a change in the produc-

<sup>1</sup> "All things being equal, the English manufacturer can turn out a considerably larger amount of work in a given time than a foreign manufacturer, so much as to counterbalance the difference of the working days, between 60 hours a week here and 72 or 80 elsewhere." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, October 31, 1885, p. 65. —A more widespread legal restriction of the hours of labour in continental factories would be an infallible means for diminishing this qualitative difference between the continental and the English working day.

tivity and intensity of labour either precedes or immediately follows a reduction in the length of the working day.<sup>1</sup>

B. Now let us suppose that the length of the working day is increased. Let the necessary labour time be 6 hours, or the value of labour power 3s.; and let the surplus labour be 6 hours, and the surplus value therefore 3s. The total working day will then be 12 hours, and will be embodied in a value of 6s. If the working day be now lengthened by 2 hours, the price of labour power remaining unchanged, the relative magnitude of surplus value increases as well as the absolute magnitude. Although the magnitude of the value of labour power remains unchanged absolutely, it declines relatively. Under the conditions assumed in 1, the relative value of labour power could not change without a change in its absolute value. Here, on the other hand, the change in the relative value of labour power is the result of an absolute change in the magnitude of surplus value.

Since the value in which a day's labour is embodied increases as the working day grows longer, there can be a simultaneous increase in the price of labour power and in surplus value, the increase in these two being equal or unequal. Thus a simultaneous increase in the respective magnitudes may occur in either of two cases: when there is an absolute increase in the length of the working day; and when there is an increase in the intensity of the labour without any such increase in the length of the working day.

When there is an increase in the length of the working day, the price of labour power may fall below its value, although it remains nominally unchanged, or even increases. For, as the reader will remember, the value of a day's labour power is estimated in accordance with its normal average duration, or in accordance with the normal duration of life among the workers; and therefore (in conformity with the general nature of man) upon a calculus as to the normal transformation of bodily substance into motion.<sup>2</sup> Up to a certain point, the increased wear and tear of labour power

<sup>1</sup> "There are compensating circumstances . . . which the working of the Ten Hours Act has brought to light." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, December 1, 1848, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> "The amount of labour which a man had undergone in the course of 24 hours might be approximately arrived at by an examination of the chemical changes which had taken place in his body, changed forms in matter indicating the anterior exercises of dynamic force." Grove, *On the Correlation of Physical Forces*.

which is inseparable from an increase in the length of the working day can be compensated by higher wages. Beyond this point, wear and tear increases in geometrical progression, and at the same time all the normal conditions essential to the reproduction and functioning of labour power are thrown out of gear. The price of labour power and its rate of exploitation cease to be commensurable quantities.

#### 4. SIMULTANEOUS VARIATIONS IN DURATION, PRODUCTIVITY, AND INTENSITY OF LABOUR.

It is obvious that under this head a great many combinations are possible. Any two of the factors may vary while the third remains constant, or all three of them may vary simultaneously. They may vary to an equal or to an unequal degree, and in the same direction or in opposite directions, so that their variations may counteract one another, wholly or in part. Still, the analysis of all possible cases can easily be achieved in accordance with the principles explained under heads 1, 2, and 3. The effect of every possible combination can be calculated by treating each factor in turn as variable, and the other two as constant for the time being. It will suffice, therefore, to discuss two important instances briefly.

A. Declining productivity of labour with a simultaneous increase in the length of the working day.

When we are speaking here of a decline in the productivity of labour, we are concerned with branches of industry whose products determine the value of labour power; for instance, a decline in the productivity of labour in consequence of an accelerating decline in the fertility of the soil, with a corresponding increase in the prices of agricultural produce. Let us suppose that the working day is one of 12 hours, that the amount of value created in one such day is 6s., that half of this replaces the value of the labour power, whilst the other half forms surplus value. Then the labour day is divided into 6 hours' necessary labour and 6 hours' surplus value. Owing to the rise in the price of the products of the soil, let us suppose that the value of labour power now rises from 3s. to 4s., so that the necessary labour time, which was 6 hours, has become 8 hours. The working day remaining unchanged in length, the surplus labour falls from 6 hours to 4 hours, and the surplus value from 3s. to

2s. If, now, the length of the working day be increased by 2 hours, that is from 12 hours to 14 hours, the surplus labour will then be 6 hours, just as it was under the conditions considered at the outset of the paragraph, and the surplus value will still be 3s., but there will be a decline in its proportional value as compared with the value of the labour power measured by the amount of necessary labour time. If the working day be increased by 4 hours, from 12 hours to 16 hours, then the relative magnitudes of surplus value and value of labour power, of surplus labour and necessary labour, continue unchanged; but the absolute magnitude of surplus value rises from 3s. to 4s., that of surplus labour from 6 working hours to 8, being an increase of  $\frac{1}{3}$ , or  $33\frac{1}{3}\%$ . Therefore, with diminishing productivity of labour and a simultaneous increase in the length of the working day, the absolute magnitude of surplus value may remain constant, at the very time when its relative magnitude diminishes; or its relative magnitude may remain unchanged while its absolute magnitude increases; and, if the increase in the length of the working day be sufficient, both may increase.

During the period between 1799 and 1815, the increasing price of the necessaries of life in England led to a nominal increase in wages, although real wages, in terms of the necessaries of life, were falling. From this fact, West and Ricardo inferred that the decline in the productivity of agricultural labour had led to a decline in the rate of surplus value, and for them this assumption of a fact that existed only in their imaginations became the starting-point of important analyses into the relative magnitudes of wages, profit, and land-rent. As a matter of fact, at this time, thanks to the increasing intensity of labour and to the enforced increase in the length of the working day, surplus value increased both absolutely and relatively. This was the period during which an immoderate increase in the length of the working day was being taken as a matter of course; it was the period peculiarly characterised by an

\* "Corn and labour rarely march quite abreast; but there is an obvious limit beyond which they cannot be separated. With regard to the unusual exertions made by the labouring classes in periods of dearness, which produce the fall of wages noticed in the evidence" [before the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, 1814-1815], "they are most meritorious in the individuals, and certainly favour the growth of capital. But no man of humanity could wish to see them

increase, on the one hand of capital, and on the other of pauperism.<sup>1</sup>

B. Increasing intensity and productivity of labour, with a simultaneous diminution in the length of the working day.

Increased productivity of labour and an increase in its intensity have a like effect. Both of them increase the amount of products created in a given period of time. Both of them, therefore, reduce the portion of the working day which the worker needs for the production of his means of subsistence, or of their equivalent. The minimal length of the working day is determined by this necessary but contractile portion of it. If the length of the working day were to be reduced to this minimum, surplus labour would disappear, and that is impossible under the capitalist regime.

constant and unremitted. They are most admirable as a temporary relief; but if they were constantly in action, effects of a similar kind would result from them, as from the population of a country being pushed to the very extreme limits of its food." Malthus, *Inquiry into the Nature and Progress of Rent*, London, 1815, p. 48, footnote.—Here Malthus obviously has in mind the increase in the working day, and elsewhere in his pamphlet he more than once makes direct allusion to this increase; whereas Ricardo and others, though the increase in the length of the working day was notorious, persisted in making an unchanged length of the working day the basis of all their investigations. The more honour to Malthus for being plain-spoken about this matter! But the conservative interests, whose servitor he was, made it impossible for him to see that an unlimited increase in the length of the working day, combined with an extraordinary development of machinery and with the exploitation of the labour of women and children, could not fail to make a large proportion of the working class "superfluous"; especially as soon as the war came to an end and the monopoly of England in the world market was over and done with. Naturally, it was far more convenient to himself, and far more accordant with the interests of the ruling classes (whom Malthus idolised with all the fervour which was fitting in a parson) for him to explain this "over-population" as due to the eternal laws of nature, instead of explaining it as the outcome of nothing more than the natural history of capitalist production.

<sup>1</sup> "A principal cause of the increase of capital, during the war proceeded from the greater exertions, and perhaps the greater privations, of the labouring classes, the most numerous in every society. More women and children were compelled, by necessitous circumstances, to enter upon laborious occupations; and former workmen were, from the same cause, obliged to devote a greater portion of their time to increase production." *Essays on Political Economy, in which are illustrated the Principal Causes of the present National Distress*, London, 1830, p. 248.

The abolition of the capitalist method of production would allow the length of the working day to be reduced to the amount of necessary labour time. But, even in the latter case, the amount of necessary labour time would (other things being equal) undergo extension. It would do so, on the one hand, because the worker's essential wants would increase, because his standard of life would rise. On the other hand, a part of what is now regarded as surplus labour would be accounted necessary labour, namely that amount of labour which is necessary for the provision of a fund for reserve and accumulation.

The greater the increase in the productivity of labour, the more can the length of the working day be reduced; and the more the length of the working day is reduced the greater can be the increase in the intensity of labour. From a social standpoint, the productivity of labour increases as the economy of labour increases. Economy of labour here means, not only an economising of the means of production, but also the avoidance of all needless labour. Although the capitalist method of production enforces economy in each individual business, the anarchy of competition leads to the most preposterous squandering of labour power and of the social means of production; while, as a side issue, capitalism leads to the creation of numerous occupations which are indispensable to itself, but which are in themselves superfluous.

The intensity and the productivity of labour being taken as constant, the proportion of the social working day which it will be necessary to devote to material production will be shorter, and, as a consequence, the amount of time available for the individual's free intellectual and social activities will be greater, in proportion as the work is equably assigned to all the able-bodied members of society, and in inverse proportion to the extent to which a particular social stratum is able to shift the natural burden of labour from the shoulders of its own members to the shoulders of those belonging to another stratum. There will be a limit to the extent to which the working day can be reduced, but this limit will depend upon the productivity of the generalised labour of the community. In capitalist society, on the other hand, leisure time for a privileged class is produced by converting the whole lifetime of the masses into labour time.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### VARIOUS FORMULAE FOR THE RATE OF SURPLUS VALUE

WE have seen that the rate of surplus value is represented by the following formulae:

$$\begin{aligned} 1. \quad \frac{\text{surplus value}}{\text{variable capital}} \left( \frac{s}{v} \right) &= \frac{\text{surplus value}}{\text{value of labour power}} \\ &= \frac{\text{surplus labour}}{\text{necessary labour}} \end{aligned}$$

The two first of these formulae represent, as a ratio of values, that which, in the third formula, is represented as a ratio of the times during which the values are produced. These formulae, equated one to another, are rigorously definite and correct. We therefore find them substantially, though not consciously elaborated, in the classical political economy. There, also, we encounter the following formulae, derived from the foregoing:

$$\begin{aligned} 2. \quad \frac{\text{surplus labour}}{\text{working day}} &= \frac{\text{surplus value}}{\text{value of the product}} \\ &= \frac{\text{surplus product}}{\text{total product}} \end{aligned}$$

One and the same ratio is here expressed as a ratio of labour times, of the values in which these labour times are embodied, and of the products in which these values exist. It is, of course, assumed that by "value of the product" is meant, only the value newly created in a working day, the constant part of the value of the product being excluded.

In all these formulae, the actual degree of exploitation of labour, or the rate of surplus value, is falsely expressed. Let the working day be 12 hours. Then, making the same assumptions as in former instances, the actual rate of exploitation of labour will be represented by the following ratios:

$$\frac{6 \text{ hours' surplus labour}}{6 \text{ hours' necessary labour}} = \frac{\text{surplus value of } 3s.}{\text{variable capital of } 3s.} = 100 \%$$



But from the formulae under 2, we get:

$$\frac{\text{6 hours' surplus labour}}{\text{working day of 12 hours}} = \frac{\text{surplus value of 3s.}}{\text{value created of 6s.}} = 50 \%$$

These deduced formulae really express the proportion in which the working day, or the value produced by it, is divided between capitalist and worker. If, therefore, they are to be treated as direct expressions of the rate of self-expansion of capital, the following erroneous law would be valid: Surplus labour or surplus value can never reach 100.<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as surplus labour can never form anything but an aliquot part of the working day, or inasmuch as surplus value can never form anything more than an aliquot part of the total amount of value created, it necessarily follows that surplus labour always consists of a shorter time than the working day, or that surplus value always represents a smaller amount than the total value created. But if they were to attain the ratio of 100:100, they would have to be equal. For surplus labour to absorb the whole of the working day (we are concerned here with the average

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Rodbertus, *Soziale Briefe an Kirchmann*, third letter, *Widerlegung der Ricardo'schen Theorie von der Grundrente und Begründung einer neuen Rententheorie*, Berlin, 1851. I shall come back to this letter presently. Although it contains a false theory of land-rent, the writer has seen through the nature of capitalist production. [Note added by Friedrich Engels. The foregoing shows how friendly was Marx's attitude towards his predecessors whenever he discovered in their writings genuine advances, sound new ideas. Since the first edition of *Das Kapital* appeared, the publication of Rodbertus' letters to Rudolf Meyer has shown that certain reservations must be made in what was said in the text by Marx. In those letters, we find the following passage: "Capital must be rescued, not only from labour, but also from itself. This rescue will best be achieved by treating the activities of the capitalist entrepreneur as economic and political functions that have been delegated to him because he is the owner of capital, and by treating his profit as a form of salary paid to him because as yet we have no other kind of social organisation. But salaries may be regulated, and they may be reduced if they take too much from wages. Marx's onslaught upon society (that is what his book seems to me) can thus be warded off. . . . Speaking generally, Marx's book is not so much a study of capital as a polemic against the extant form of capital—a form which he confounds with the concept of capital itself. This confusion is the source of his mistakes." *Briefe, etc., von Dr. Rodbertus-Jagetzow*, edited by Dr. Rudolf Meyer, Berlin, 1881, vol. I, p. 111, forty-eighth letter from Rodbertus.—To such ideological platitudes did Rodbertus' bold attack in his "Social Letters" finally dwindle.]

working day of the working week, the working year, etc.), the necessary labour will have to fall to zero. But if necessary labour disappears, surplus labour will also disappear, since the latter is only a function of the former. The ratio  $\frac{\text{surplus labour}}{\text{working day}} = \frac{\text{surplus value}}{\text{value created}}$  can, therefore, never reach

the limitary ratio of  $\frac{100}{100}$ , and still less can it rise to  $\frac{100 + x}{100}$ .

But it is otherwise with the rate of surplus value, or the actual degree of the exploitation of labour. Take, for instance, Monsieur Léonce de Lavergne's estimate, according to which the English agricultural labourer receives only one-fourth of the product<sup>1</sup> or of its value, as against three-fourths which accrue to the capitalist (the farmer, in this case)—apart from the question of how the booty is subsequently divided between the capitalist (the farmer), the landlord, and others. According to this estimate, the ratio between the surplus labour and the necessary labour of the English agricultural labourer is 3:1, this being a rate of exploitation amounting to 300 %.

The method in vogue among economists of treating the hours of labour as constant in number was confirmed by the use of the formulae 2, because in them surplus labour is always compared with a working day of fixed length. The same holds good when the dividing-up of the value that has been created is the sole consideration. The working day which has already been embodied in products having a given amount of value, is always a working day of a given length.

The habit of representing surplus value and the value of labour power as fractions of the value created (a practice which is the outcome of the capitalist form of production itself, and one whose significance will become apparent later) masks the specific character of the relation that underlies capital, namely the exchange of variable capital for living labour power, and the consequent exclusion of the worker from the product. In place of these actualities, people see only the delusive semblance of a relation of

<sup>1</sup> That part of the product which merely replaces the constant capital that has been expended is, of course, left out of account in this calculation. Monsieur de Lavergne, a blind admirer of England, is inclined to estimate the share of the capitalist too low rather than too high.

association, in which the worker and the capitalist share the product in proportions corresponding to the different elements they respectively contribute towards its formation.\*

For the rest, the formulae 2 are always reconver-  
 tible into the formulae 1. If, for instance, we have  
surplus labour of 6 hours  
working day of 12 hours, then the necessary labour time  
 is equal to a labour day of 12 hours minus the surplus labour  
 of 6 hours, so that we get:

$$\frac{\text{surplus labour of 6 hours}}{\text{necessary labour of 6 hours}} = \frac{100}{100}$$

There is a third group of formulae, which I have already  
 given by anticipation more than once. They run as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} 3. \quad \frac{\text{surplus value}}{\text{value of labour power}} &= \frac{\text{surplus labour}}{\text{necessary labour}} \\ &= \frac{\text{unpaid labour}}{\text{paid labour}} \end{aligned}$$

The formula  $\frac{\text{unpaid labour}}{\text{paid labour}}$  might lead to misunderstand-  
 ing, might make us think that the capitalist pays for labour  
 and not for labour power; but the foregoing considerations  
 will enable us to escape this misunderstanding. The formula

$$\frac{\text{unpaid labour}}{\text{paid labour}}$$

is only a popular expression for  $\frac{\text{surplus labour}}{\text{necessary labour}}$

The capitalist pays the value of the labour power (or the  
 price of the labour power, which is not always identical  
 with the value), and receives in exchange the faculty of

\* Seeing that all advanced forms of the capitalist process of  
 production are forms of cooperation, nothing, of course, can be  
 easier than to ignore their specifically antagonistic character, and  
 thus to pretend that they are free forms of association. That is what  
 Count A. de Laborde does in his book, *De l'esprit de l'association dans  
 tous les intérêts de la communauté*, Paris, 1818.—H. Carey, an American  
 writer, is at times able to perform this conjuring trick with equal  
 success when he is dealing with the characteristics of the slave-  
 holding system.

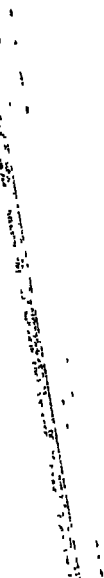
disposing of the living labour power. His usufruct of this labour power consists of two periods. During the first of these periods, the worker is producing a value that is merely equal to the value of his labour power, but is nothing more than an equivalent. Thus the capitalist who pays the price of the labour power, acquires in return a product of identical price. It is just as if he had bought the finished product in the market. In the surplus-labour period, on the other hand, the usufruct of the labour power creates value for the capitalist without his having to provide any equivalent for it.\* He gets this conversion of labour power into value free, gratis, and for nothing, and in that sense surplus labour can be called unpaid labour.

Capital, therefore, is not only what Adam Smith calls it, the command over labour. Fundamentally, it is the command of unpaid labour. All surplus value, whatever the form into which it may subsequently become crystallised—as profit, land-rent, interest, etc.—is, substantially, the materialisation of unpaid labour time. The secret of the self-expansion of capital finds its explanation in this, that capital has at its disposal a definite quantity of other people's unpaid labour.

\* Although the physiocrats could not solve the enigma of surplus value, they were at least able to see this much, that surplus value is "independent and disposable wealth, which the owner has not purchased, and which he sells". Turgot, *Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*, p. 11.

PART SIX

WAGES



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### TRANSFORMATION OF THE VALUE, OR THE PRICE, OF LABOUR POWER INTO WAGES

IN the surface aspect of bourgeois society, the worker's wages appear to be the price of labour, a definite amount of money paid for a definite amount of labour. People talk about the value of the labour, and say that the monetary expression of that value is the necessary or natural price of the labour. People speak, also, of the market price of labour, as a price which fluctuates on either side of its necessary price.

But what is the value of a commodity? It is the objective form assumed by the social labour that has been expended in its production. Well, how do we measure the magnitude of its value? We measure that value by the magnitude of the labour it contains. How, then, should we ascertain the value of, say, a 12-hour working day? We should measure it by the twelve working hours contained in a working day of 12 hours—which is a ridiculous tautology.<sup>1</sup>

If labour is to be sold in the market as a commodity, that labour must exist before it can be sold. But if the worker could give his labour an independent existence, he would sell a commodity, and not labour.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mr. Ricardo, ingeniously enough, avoids a difficulty which, on a first view, threatens to encumber his doctrine that value depends on the quantity of labour employed in production. If this principle is rigidly adhered to, it follows that the value of labour depends on the quantity of labour employed in producing it—which is evidently absurd. By a dexterous turn, therefore, Mr. Ricardo makes the value of labour depend on the quantity of labour required to produce wages; or, to give him the benefit of his own language, he maintains, that the value of labour is to be estimated by the quantity of labour required to produce wages; by which he means the quantity of labour required to produce the money or commodities given to the labourer. This is similar to saying, that the value of cloth is estimated, not by the quantity of labour bestowed on its production, but by the quantity of labour bestowed on the production of the silver for which the cloth is exchanged." *A Critical Dissertation on the Nature, etc., of Value*, pp. 50–51. [By S. Bailey, published anonymously.]

<sup>2</sup> "If you call labour a commodity, it is not like a commodity which is first produced in order to exchange, and then brought to market

Apart from these contradictions, a direct exchange of money (that is, objectified labour) for living labour would either abrogate the law of value, which only begins to develop freely on the basis of capitalist production, or else it would do away with capitalist production itself, which rests directly on wage labour. The working day of 12 hours, for instance, is represented in a money value of 6s. Now here there are two possibilities. It may be that equivalents are being exchanged, and in that case the worker is receiving 6s. for 12 hours' labour. Then the price of his labour would be equal to the price of what he produces. But if that were so, he would not produce any surplus value for the purchaser of his labour; the 6s. would not be transformed into capital; the foundations of capitalist production would vanish, whereas it is upon these foundations that he sells his labour, and his labour becomes wage labour. The other possibility is that for 12 hours' labour he receives less than 6s., that is to say less than 12 hours' labour. In that case, 12 hours' labour are exchanged for 10 hours, or 6 hours, or even less labour, as the case may be. Such an equating of unequal magnitudes does not merely make an end of the determination of value. So self-destructive a contradiction cannot possibly be expressed or formulated as a general law.<sup>1</sup>

It does not help us out of our difficulty to explain the exchange of more labour for less by saying that the labour has a different form in the two cases, that one labour is objectified, the other living labour.<sup>2</sup> This is all the more

where it must exchange with other commodities according to the respective quantities of each which there may be in the market at the time; labour is created at the moment it is brought to market; nay, it is brought to market before it is created." *Observations on certain Verbal Disputes, etc.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>1</sup> "Treating labour as a commodity, and capital, the produce of labour, as another, then, if the values of these two commodities were regulated by equal quantities of labour, a given amount of labour would . . . exchange for that quantity of capital which had been produced by the same amount of labour; antecedent labour would . . . exchange for the same amount of present labour. But the value of labour in relation to other commodities . . . is determined not by equal quantities of labour." E. G. Wakefield, in his edition of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, London, 1836, vol. I, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> "It has been necessary to agree" [a new version of the "social contract"! ] "that wherever work done is exchanged for work to be done, the latter [the capitalist] shall have a value higher than that which the former [the worker] has." Simonde [de Sismondi], *De la richesse commerciale*, Geneva, 1803, vol. I, p. 37.



absurd inasmuch as the value of a commodity is determined, not by the quantity of labour actually objectified in it, but by the quantity of living labour necessary for its production. Suppose that a commodity represents 6 working hours. If inventions are made enabling it to be produced in 3 hours, the value of the commodity which has already been produced falls to one half. It now represents only 3 hours of necessary social labour, instead of the 6 hours it formerly represented. Thus what determines the magnitude of the value of a commodity is the amount of labour needed for its production, not the objectified form of that labour.

What actually confronts the owner of money in the market is not labour, but the worker. What the worker sells is his labour power. As soon as his work really begins, it has already ceased to belong to him, and can therefore no longer be sold by him. Labour is the substance and the immanent measure of value, but it has itself no value.<sup>1</sup>

In the phrase "value of labour", the concept of value is not merely expunged, but is transformed into its opposite. It is an expression as imaginary as when we speak of the value of the earth. Yet these imaginary expressions arise out of the very relations of production. They are categories for the phenomenal forms of essential relations. The students of other sciences are familiar with the fact that phenomenal things often appear in inverted forms; political economists are the only students of science who do not know this.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Labour, the exclusive standard of value, . . . the creator of all wealth, no commodity." Thomas Hodgskin.

<sup>2</sup> Those who attempt to explain such phrases as nothing more than poetic licence, only show how impotent is their analysis. Proudhon wrote: "Labour is said to have value, not as being itself merchandise, but in view of the values which it is potentially supposed to contain. The value of labour is a figurative expression." In answer to this I wrote in my *Misère de la philosophie*, pp. 34-35: "In labour as merchandise, which is a terrible reality, he can see nothing but a condensed form of words. We are to suppose, therefore, that the whole of contemporary society, which is based upon labour as merchandise, is henceforward to be regarded as based upon a poetic licence, upon a figurative expression. If society wants to 'rid itself of all the inconveniences' with which it is afflicted, well and good, let it rid itself of cacophonous terms, let it change its form of words. All it need do is apply to the Academy, and ask for the publication of a new edition of that institution's dictionary."—Of course, it is far more convenient to think that value means nothing at all. Then we can unceremoniously lump anything we like into this category. That is what J. B. Say does. Question: "What is value?"

Classical political economy borrowed uncritically from everyday life the category "price of labour", and then went on to ask how this price is determined. The classical economists soon recognised that the change in the ratio of supply and demand could not explain, as concerned the price of labour or the price of any other commodity, anything more than changes in price, that is to say the oscillations of market prices above or below a definite amount. When there is a balance between supply and demand, the fluctuations in price cease (other things being equal). But if that be so, then supply and demand fail to explain anything. The price of labour, when there is a balance between supply and demand, is its definite, its natural price; its price independent of the ratio between supply and demand; and that is the actual thing which we have to analyse. Or, again, when the fluctuations in market prices were observed throughout a lengthy period, such as a year, it was found that they cancelled one another, leaving an average price, a constant quantity. Obviously, therefore, the average price must be determined by some other factor than the deviations from it which cancelled one another. This price which dominates and controls the accidental market prices of labour (the physiocrats termed it the "necessary price", and Adam Smith spoke of it as the "natural price" of labour) can, as in the case of other commodities, be nothing else than its value expressed in money. In this way, political economy fancied that it was able to probe through the accidental prices of labour and reach its value. As with other commodities, this value was determined by cost of production. But what is the cost of production of the worker? What does it cost to produce, or to reproduce, a worker? Unawares, the economists allowed that question to take the place of the one they had originally asked; for, as far as the problem of the cost of production of labour was concerned, they went round and round in a circle and made no advance. What, therefore, in political economy is termed

Answer: "It is what a thing is worth." Question: "What is price?"

Answer: "The value of a thing expressed in money." Question:

"Why has the cultivation of the soil . . . a value?" Answer:

"Because we put a price on it."—Thus value is what a thing is worth, and the earth has "value" because we express its value in money. This is certainly a very simple way of arriving at a knowledge of the why and wherefore of things!

the value of labour, is, in reality, the value of the labour power which exists in the personality of the worker; and this is just as different from its function, labour, as a machine is from the work it does. Engrossed in considering the difference between the market prices of labour and its so-called value, and in considering the relation of this value to the rate of profit and to the values of the commodities produced by means of labour, etc., they never noticed that the course of the analysis had not only led from the market prices of labour to its presumed value, but had also led to the resolution of this value of labour itself into the value of labour power. Owing to their unawareness of the result of their own analysis, owing to their uncritical acceptance of the categories "value of labour", "natural price of labour". etc., as ultimate and adequate expressions of the value relation they were considering, the classical political economists (as we shall see later) became entangled in inextricable confusions and contradictions, and thus provided the vulgar economists with a solid platform on which to practise the cult which has become a matter of principle with them, a cult of triviality, the worship of appearances.

Now let us turn to consider how the value and the price of labour power secure representation in their transformed shape as wages.

We know that the daily value of labour power is calculated upon a definite expectation of life for the worker, and that to this, likewise, there corresponds a definite length of the working day. Let us assume that the customary working day is 12 hours, and that the daily value of labour power is 3s., this being the monetary expression of a value in which 6 working hours are embodied. When the worker receives 3s., he receives the value of his labour power operating for a space of 12 hours. If this daily value of labour power be now expressed as the value of the day's labour, we get the formula: the 12-hours' labour has a value of 3s. Thus the value of the labour power determines the value of the labour; or, expressing it in money, determines its necessary price. If, on the other hand, the price of the labour power deviates from its value, the price of the labour likewise deviates from its so-called value.

Since the value of labour is only an irrational expression for the value of labour power, it is self-evident that the

value of the labour must invariably be less than the value it creates, for the capitalist always arranges that labour power shall continue in operation for a longer time than is necessary for the reproduction of its own value. In the foregoing example, the value of labour power operating for 12 hours is 3s., this being a value for whose reproduction labour must operate during 6 hours. The value created, however, is 6s., inasmuch as the labour power operates during 12 hours, and the value created is dependent, not upon the value of the labour power itself, but upon the duration of its functioning. Thus we arrive at the result, which at the first glance seems absurd, that labour which creates a value of 6s. has itself a value of 3s.<sup>1</sup>

We see, further, that the value of 3s., which represents the paid portion of the working day (that is to say, 6 hours of labour), appears as the value or the price of the total working day of 12 hours, which includes 6 unpaid hours. Thus the wage form expunges every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus labour, into paid and unpaid labour. All the labour assumes the aspect of paid labour. In the *corvée* (the forced labour of serfs under the feudal system), the work which the serf does for himself and the forced labour he does for the seigneur are set apart one from another in space and time, are palpably distinguishable one from another. In slave labour, even that part of the working day in which the slave is merely replacing the value of his own means of subsistence, and during which, therefore, he is really working for himself, assumes the aspect of work for his master. All his labour seems to be unpaid labour.<sup>2</sup> In the case of wage labour, on the other hand, even surplus labour or unpaid labour appears to be paid. In one case, the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, in which, on p. 40, I state that, in the portion of the work which deals with capital the following problem will be solved: "How does production on the basis of exchange-value determined solely by labour time, lead to the result that the exchange-value of labour is less than the exchange-value of its product?"

<sup>2</sup> The "Morning Star", a London free-trade organ whose simplicity verges on stupidity, declared again and again during the American Civil War, with all the moral indignation of which man is capable, that the negroes in the Confederate States worked for absolutely nothing. It would have done well to compare the daily cost of such a negro with that, for instance, of a free worker in the East End of London!

property relation hides the fact that the slave works part of his time for himself; in the other case, the money relation hides the fact that the wage worker works part of his time for nothing.

Hence we can understand the decisive importance of the transformation of the value and the price of labour power into the form of the wages of labour, or into the value and the price of labour itself. Upon this phenomenal form, which renders the real relation invisible and brings its very opposite to light, are grounded the juridical concepts entertained alike by the worker and the capitalist, all the mystifications of the capitalist method of production, all its illusions of freedom, all the apologetic artifices of the vulgar economists.

Nothing can be easier to explain why this is so, why this phenomenal form is necessary—even though history has taken so long in solving the mystery of wages.

The exchange between capital and labour at first presents itself to the observer as being something of exactly the same kind as the buying and selling of other commodities. The purchaser gives a certain sum of money, and the seller supplies an article which is of a different kind from money. The jurist's consciousness can recognise here nothing more than a material difference, which finds expression in the juridically equivalent formulas: "I give that you may give, I give that you may make, I make that you may give, and I make that you may make."

Furthermore, since exchange-value and use-value are essentially incommensurable magnitudes, the expressions "value of labour" and "price of labour" do not seem any more irrational than the expressions "value of cotton" and "price of cotton". Besides, the worker is paid after he has performed his labour. In its function as means of payment, money subsequently makes concrete the value or the price of the article that is delivered, which, in the given case, is the value or the price of the labour that is performed. Finally, the "use-value" which the worker delivers to the capitalist is, in reality, not his labour power, but a function of that labour power—some particular useful work, such as tailoring, shoemaking, spinning, or what you will. The ordinary mind is quite unable to grasp that, from another aspect, this specific kind of labour has a general significance as a value-creating element, as a quality which distinguishes it from all other commodities.

Let us put ourselves in the place of the worker who, for 12 hours' work let us suppose, receives the value created in 6 hours' work, say 3s. For him, in actual fact, his 12 hours' labour is the means whereby he purchases the 3s. The value of his labour power may vary with the value of his customary means of subsistence from 3s. to 4s., or from 3s. to 2s.; or, the value of his labour power remaining the same, its price, owing to changes in supply and demand, may rise to 4s. or fall to 2s.; but he always performs 12 hours' labour. Necessarily, therefore, every change in the magnitude of the equivalent he receives, appears to him to be a change in the value or the price of his 12 hours' labour. Adam Smith, who treated the working day as a constant,<sup>1</sup> was misled by this circumstance into maintaining that the value of labour is constant, although the value of the means of subsistence varies, and although one and the same working day will therefore bring in a varying amount of money to the worker.

Now let us turn to consider the capitalist. He wants to get as much labour as possible for as little money as possible. The only thing, therefore, which interests him in practice, is the difference between the price of labour power and the value which its function creates. But he tries to buy all commodities as cheaply as possible, and invariably explains his profit to himself as due simply to buying cheap and selling dear, to buying a thing below its value and selling it above its value. He therefore fails to realise that, if such a thing as the value of labour really existed, and he really paid this value, no capital could exist, for his money could not be transformed into capital.

Moreover, the actual movement of wages exhibits phenomena which seem to prove that what is paid for is, not the value of labour power, but the value of its function, the labour itself. We can refer these phenomena to two great classes. First of all, we have a change in wages associated with a change in the length of the working day. We might just as well infer that because it costs more to hire a machine for a week than for a day, what we are paying for is, not the value of the machine, but the value of its working. Secondly, we have the individual differences

<sup>1</sup> Only in a casual manner, in connexion with the topic of piece-work rates of wages, does Adam Smith allude to variations in the working day.

in the wages of different workers who are doing the same kind of work. We find the same individual differences in the slave system, where labour power is sold openly, and without circumlocution—but here no illusions arise. In the slave system, however, the advantage of a labour power above the average, or the disadvantage of a labour power below the average, accrues to the slave owner; whereas in the system of wage labour, the advantage or disadvantage accrues to the worker himself, because he himself sells his labour power, whereas the labour power of the slave is sold by another person.

For the rest, in respect of the phenomenal form “value and price of labour”, or “wages” as contrasted with the essential relation underlying that phenomenal form, which is the value and the price of labour power—the same difference holds that holds in respect of all phenomenal forms and their hidden substrata. The phenomenal forms show themselves spontaneously and directly, as current forms of thought; the actual substrata must be discovered by scientific enquiry. Classical political economy gets very near to the inner reality, without, however, consciously formulating it. Such a conscious formulation is impossible to economics until it has shed its bourgeois skin.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### TIME-WAGES

WAGES, in their turn, assume manifold forms, although we cannot learn this from a study of treatises on economics, for the authors of such treaties, being exclusively interested in the substance, neglect differences of form. A general account of these multifarious forms belongs to the special doctrine of wage labour, and therefore has no place in the present work. Still, it is incumbent here to distinguish briefly between the two dominant forms of wages.

The reader will remember that the sale of labour power is always effected for definite periods of time. Consequently, the form in which the daily value, the weekly value, etc., of labour power directly manifests itself, is that of "time-wages", that is to say daily wages, weekly wages, etc.

Now, the first thing we have to point out is that the laws set forth in Chapter Fifteen on the changes in the relative magnitudes of price of labour power and surplus value, pass, by a simple change of form, into laws of wages. Similarly, the distinction between the exchange-value of labour power and the quantity of the means of subsistence into which this value is transformed, now appears as the distinction between nominal and real wages. It is needless to repeat as regards the phenomenal form, what has already been fully discussed as regards the substantial form. Enough to speak of a few points characteristic of time-wages.

The sum of money<sup>1</sup> which the worker receives for his day's labour, his week's labour, etc., forms the amount of his nominal wages, or of his wages estimated in value. It is obvious, however, that, according as the length of the working day may vary (according, that is to say, to the quantity of labour supplied daily by the worker), the same daily wages, weekly wages, etc., may represent a very different price of labour—this meaning the payment of very different sums of money for the same quantity of

<sup>1</sup> The value of money is, in the present discussion, always assumed to be constant.



labour.<sup>1</sup> In time-wages, therefore, we must once more distinguish between the total amount of wages (daily wages, weekly wages, etc.) and the price of labour. How, then, are we to find this price, how are we to ascertain the money value of a given quantity of labour? The average price of labour can be found by dividing the average daily value of labour power by the number of hours in the average working day. If, for example, the daily value of labour power be 3s. (this being the value created by 6 hours' labour), and if the working day be one of 12 hours, then the price of one working hour is  $\frac{3}{12}$ th of a shilling = 3d.

The price of the working hour, thus ascertained, is the unit of measurement for the price of labour.

It follows, therefore, that the daily wage, the weekly wage, etc., may remain the same although the price of labour is continually declining. If, for instance, the customary labour day were 10 hours, and the daily value of labour power 3s., the price of the working hour would be 3½d.; but it would fall to 3d. as soon as the working day became one of 12 hours, and it would fall to 2½d. as soon as the working day became one of 15 hours. All the same, the daily wage, or the weekly wage, remains unaltered. Conversely, the daily wage or the weekly wage may rise, although the price of labour remains constant, or even falls. If, for example, the working day be 10 hours and the daily value of labour power be 3s., then the price of a working hour is 3½d. If the worker, owing to an improvement in trade, now works for 12 hours a day, the price of labour remaining unchanged, his daily wage will be 3s. 7½d., though there has been no variation in the price of labour. A similar result could be achieved by an increase in the intensity of labour without any change in its extensive magnitude.<sup>2</sup> An increase in the nominal daily wage or

<sup>1</sup> "The price of labour is the sum paid for a given quantity of labour." Sir Edward West, *Price of Corn and Wages of Labour*, London, 1826, p. 67.—West is the author of an anonymous essay which marks an epoch in the history of English economics, *Essay on the Application of Capital to Land*, by a Fellow of University College, Oxford, London, 1815.

<sup>2</sup> "The wages of labour depend upon the price of labour and the quantity of labour performed. . . . An increase in the wages of labour does not necessarily imply an enhancement of the price of labour. From fuller employment, and greater exertions, the wages

weekly wage may therefore be accompanied by an unaltered price of labour, or by a decline in the price of labour. The same thing applies to the income of the working-class family, when the work performed by the head of the family is supplemented by the work of other members of the family. There are, therefore, ways of lowering the price of labour independent of a reduction in the nominal daily or weekly wage.<sup>1</sup>

As a general law it follows that, given the amount of daily or weekly labour, the daily wage or weekly wage will depend upon the price of labour, which itself varies either with the value of labour power or with the extent of the deviation of its price from its value. Given, on the other hand, the price of labour, the daily or weekly wage depends on the quantity of the daily or weekly labour.

The price of the working hour, the unit of time wages, is the quotient of the daily value of labour power divided by the number of hours of the customary working day. Let us suppose that this latter is a 12-hour day, and that the daily value of labour is 3s., this being the amount of value created by 6 hours' labour. In these circumstances, the price of the working hour is 3d., and the amount of value created in the working hour is 6d. If the worker be now employed less than 12 hours daily (or less than 6 days a week), only 6 or 8 hours daily let us say, he will receive, at the given

of labour may be considerably increased, while the price of labour may continue the same." West, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 68, and 112.—The main question, of course, is, how the "price of labour" is determined; but West evades this by means of some trivial verbiage.

<sup>1</sup> An author I have already quoted several times, the anonymous writer of *An Essay on Trade and Commerce* (the most fanatical champion of the industrial bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century) perceives this, although he puts the matter in a confused way: "It is the quantity of labour and not the price of it" [he means by this the nominal daily or weekly wage] "that is determined by the price of provisions and other necessities: reduce the price of necessities very low, and of course you reduce the quantity of labour in proportion. . . . Master manufacturers know that there are various ways of raising and felling the price of labour, besides that of altering its nominal amount." *Op. cit.*, pp. 48 and 61.—Nassau W. Senior, who makes use of West's work without mentioning it, writes as follows in his *Three Lectures on the Rate of Wages*, London, 1830, p. 14: "The labourer is principally interested in the amount of wages."—This means that the worker is mainly interested in what he receives, the nominal sum of his wages, and not in what he gives, the quantity of labour!

price of labour, only 2s. or 1s. 6d. as his daily wage.<sup>1</sup> Since, in accordance with our assumptions, he must on the average work for 6 hours a day solely in order to produce a day's wage corresponding to the value of his labour power, and since, according to the same assumptions, during each hour he is working half an hour for himself and half an hour for the capitalist, it is obvious that he cannot obtain for himself the value of the product of 6 hours if he is employed for less than 12 hours. In earlier chapters, we were studying the disastrous consequences of overwork; here, we are able to put our finger on the source of the troubles with which the worker is affected by insufficient employment.

If the hour's wage is fixed in such a way that the capitalist does not bind himself to pay a day's wage or a week's wage, but only to pay wages for the hours during which he chooses to employ the worker, the capitalist can employ the worker for a shorter time than that which was originally utilised as the basis of an estimate of the hour's wage, or of the unit measurement for the price of labour. Since this unit of measurement is determined by the ratio

$\frac{\text{daily value of labour power}}{\text{working day of a given number of hours}}$

, it, of course, loses all meaning as soon as the working day ceases to contain a definite number of hours. The tie between paid and unpaid labour is severed. The capitalist can now extract a definite quantity of surplus labour from the worker without allowing him the labour time necessary for his own subsistence. He can suppress all regularity of employment; and, according to his own convenience, caprice, or temporary interest, he can arrange for the alternation of spells of preposterous overwork with spells of complete or partial unemployment. On the pretext that he is paying the "normal price of labour", he can increase the length of the working day to an abnormal extent without any suitable compensation for

<sup>1</sup> The effect of such an abnormal reduction of employment is quite different from that of a general reduction in the working day as the outcome of legislation. The former has nothing to do with the absolute length of the working day, and may occur just as well in a working day of 15 hours as in one of 6 hours. In the former case, the normal price of labour is calculated on the assumption that the worker is engaged for 15 hours a day; in the latter case, on the assumption that he is engaged 6 hours a day on the average. The result, therefore, is the same if he works, in the one case, only for 7½ hours, and, in the other, only for 3 hours.

this to the worker. That explains the perfectly reasonable revolt of the building-trade workers of London in the year 1860, against the attempt of the capitalists to enforce such an hourly wage upon them. A legal limitation of the working day puts an end to these abuses; but, of course, it does not stop the reduction of employment caused by the competition of machinery, by changes in the quality of the workers employed, or by partial and general crises.

When the daily wage or weekly wage is increasing, the price of labour may nominally remain constant, and may none the less sink below its normal level. This always happens when, the price of labour or the price of the working hour being constant, the working day is increased beyond its customary length. If, in the fraction

$\frac{\text{daily value of labour power}}{\text{working day}}$ , the denominator increases,

the numerator increases still more rapidly. The value of labour power, being dependent upon the wear and tear involved in its functioning, increases with the duration of its functioning, the increase in the value being more rapid than the increase in the duration of the functioning. In many branches of industry where time-wages prevail and where there are no legal restrictions imposed upon the working day, the natural growth of custom has dictated that the working day shall only be regarded as normal up to a certain duration. For instance, a 10-hour day is spoken of as the "normal working day", "the day's work", "the regular hours of work", and so on. Beyond this limit, working time is classed as overtime; and, if the hour is the unit of measurement, then an hour's overtime is paid at a higher rate than an hour of the normal working day, although the "extra pay" is often calculated at a ridiculously low rate.<sup>1</sup> The normal working day is here a fraction of the actual working day, and we find often enough that the actual working day prevails throughout a longer period of the year than the normal working day.<sup>2</sup> The increase in

<sup>1</sup> "The rate of payment for overtime" [in lacemaking] "is so small, from  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. and  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. to 2d. per hour, that it stands in painful contrast to the amount of injury produced to the health and stamina of the workpeople. . . . The small amount thus earned is also often obliged to be spent in extra nourishment." *Children's Employment Commission, Second Report*, p. XVI, n. 117.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, this happened in the paper-staining trade before the recent introduction of the Factory Act into this field of work.

the price of labour when the working day is extended beyond a certain normal limit, takes such a form in various British industries, that the price of labour during what is called the normal working day is so low that the worker is compelled to work overtime, at a better rate, if he wishes to obtain a living wage.<sup>1</sup> A legal limitation of the working day puts a stop to these amenities.<sup>2</sup>

It is a generally known fact that, the longer the working day in any branch of industry, the lower are the wages.<sup>3</sup>

"We work on with no stoppage for meals, so that the day's work of 10½ hours is finished by 4.30 p.m., and all after that is overtime, and we seldom leave off working before 6 p.m., so that we are really working overtime the whole year round." Mr. Smith's Evidence, *Children's Employment Commission, First Report*, p. 125.

<sup>1</sup> This happened, for instance, in Scottish bleaching works, before the introduction of the Factory Act in 1862. "In some parts of Scotland, this trade was carried on by a system of overtime, i.e. 10 hours a day were the regular hours of work, for which a nominal wage of 1s. 2d. per day was paid to a man, there being every day overtime for 3 or 4 hours, paid at the rate of 3d. per hour. The effect of this system was that . . . a man could not earn more than 8s. per week when working ordinary hours. . . . Without overtime, they could not earn a fair day's wages." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, April 30, 1863, p. 10.—"The higher wages, for getting adult males to work longer hours, are a temptation too strong to be resisted." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, April 30, 1848, p. 5.—The bookbinding trade in the City of London employs many young girls at ages from 14 to 15, under indentures which prescribe definite working hours. Nevertheless, during the last week of each month, they work on until 10, 11, 12, or even 1 o'clock at night, side by side with the adult workers, in a very mixed company. "The masters tempt them by extra pay and supper", which they eat in neighbouring public houses. See *Children's Employment Commission, Fifth Report*, p. 44, n. 191. Immorality is rife among these young people, owing to the conditions of their employment, but it may be regarded as a certain compensation to their "immortal souls" that a great many of the books they bind are Bibles and other devotional works!

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, April 30, 1863, p. 10.—With a remarkably accurate appreciation of the state of affairs, the London building-trades workers, during the great strike and lock-out of 1860, declared that they would only accept wages by the hour on two conditions: first, that when the price of the working hour was fixed, it should be agreed that the working day was to be either 9 or 10 hours, and that the price per hour for the 10-hour day was to be higher than that for the 9-hour day; secondly, that every hour's work beyond the normal working day should be paid a higher rate as overtime.

<sup>3</sup> "It is a very notable thing, too, that where long hours are the rule, small wages are also so." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*,

Factory Inspector A. Redgrave illustrates this by a comparative survey of the twenty-year period from 1839 to 1859. He shows that during this period wages rose in the factories which were subject to the 10-hours' law, whereas they fell in the factories where work was carried on for 14 to 15 hours a day.<sup>1</sup>

From the law, "the price of labour being given, the daily or weekly wage depends upon the quantity of labour supplied", it follows, first of all that, the lower the price of labour, the greater must be the quantity of labour, or the longer must be the working day, so that the worker may be able to secure even the pittance of an average wage. In this case, the lowness of the price of labour acts as a stimulus to the extension of the working day.<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, an extension of the working time leads to a fall in the price of labour, and thus to a fall in the daily or weekly wage.

The determination of the price of labour by the fraction  
daily value of labour power  
 working day of a given number of hours shows that a mere lengthening of the working day depresses the price of labour unless compensatory influences intervene. But the very circumstances that enable the capitalist to lengthen the working day in the long run, enable him at first, and compel him subsequently, to depress the nominal price of labour also, until the total price of the increased number of working hours declines—until, that is to say, there is a decline in the daily or weekly wage. Reference to two circumstances will suffice here. If one man does the work of one and a half or two men, the supply of labour increases, although the supply of labour power in the market remains

October 31, 1863, p. 9.—"The work which obtains the scanty pittance of food is, for the most part, excessively prolonged." *Public Health, Sixth Report, 1864*, p. 15.

<sup>1</sup> *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, April 30, 1860, pp. 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> The hand-nailmakers in England, for instance, owing to the low price of their labour, have to work 15 hours a day in order to hammer out their pitiful weekly subsistence. "It's a great many hours in a day (6 a.m. to 8 p.m.), and he has to work hard all the time to get 11d. or 1s., and there is the wear of the tools, the cost of firing, and something for waste iron to go out of this, which takes off altogether 2½ or 3d." *Children's Employment Commission, Third Report*, p. 136, n. 671.—By the same working hours, the women earn a weekly wage of only 5s. *Op. cit.*, p. 137, n. 674.

constant. The competition which thus arises among the workers enables the capitalist to depress the price of labour; while, conversely, the fall in the price of labour enables him to increase the working time even more.<sup>1</sup> Soon, however, this availability of abnormal amounts of unpaid labour (amounts exceeding the average social quantity) engenders competition among the capitalists themselves. Part of the price of commodities consists of the price of labour. The unpaid part of the price of labour need not be counted in calculating the price of commodities. It can be presented to the buyer. This is the first step to which competition leads. The second step it enforces is that there shall be excluded in addition, from the selling price of the commodity at least a part of the abnormal surplus value created by the prolongation of the working day. In this way there arises, at first here and there and subsequently as a customary rule, an abnormally low selling price of the commodity, which thenceforward functions as a permanent cause of excessively low wages and excessively long hours of work, though to begin with it was the effect of these same conditions. I merely allude in passing to this concatenation of circumstances, for the analysis of competition is not our present concern. Still, for the nonce I will let the capitalist speak for himself: "In Birmingham, there is so much competition of masters one against another, that many are obliged to do things as employers that they would otherwise be ashamed of; and yet no more money is made, but only the public gets the benefit."<sup>2</sup> The reader may remember to have heard of the two kinds of London bakers: those who sell bread at the full price, and are called the "full-priced" bakers; and those who sell bread below its normal price, and are termed the "underpriced" or the "undersellers". Before the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, the "full-priced" denounced their competitors as follows: "They only exist now by first defrauding the public, and next

<sup>1</sup> Should a factory worker refuse to work the customary number of hours, "he would very shortly be replaced by somebody who would work any length of time, and thus be thrown out of employment". *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, October 31, 1849, Evidence, p. 39. n. 58.—"If one man performs the work of two, . . . the rate of profits will generally be raised . . . in consequence of the additional supply of labour having diminished its price." Senior, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Children's Employment Commission, Third Report*, Evidence, p. 66, n. 22.

getting 18 hours' work out of their men for 12 hours' wages. . . . The unpaid labour of the men was made . . . the source whereby the competition was carried on, and continues so to this day. . . . The competition among the master bakers is the cause of the difficulty in getting rid of night-work. An underseller who sells his bread below the cost price according to the price of flour, must make it up by getting more out of the labour of the men. . . . If I got only 12 hours' work out of my men, and my neighbour got 18 or 20, he must beat me in the selling price. If the men could insist on payment for overwork this would be set right. . . . A large number of those employed by the undersellers are foreigners and youths, who are obliged to accept almost any wages they can obtain."<sup>1</sup>

This jeremiad is also interesting because it shows how nothing but the semblance of the relations of production is reflected in the capitalist's brain. The capitalist is quite unaware that the normal price of labour likewise includes a definite quantity of unpaid labour, and that it is precisely this unpaid labour which is the normal source of his gain. The category of surplus labour time does not, speaking generally, exist for him, seeing that surplus labour time is included in the normal working day, which he thinks he pays for when he pays a day's wages. The overtime, on the other hand, the prolongation of the working day beyond the limits corresponding with the usual price of labour, does exist for him. When confronted with a competitor who undersells him, he is even ready to insist upon extra pay for this overtime. Here, again, he is unaware that the extra pay also includes unpaid labour, just as the price of the ordinary working hour does. For instance, let us suppose that the price of one hour of the 12-hour working day is 3d., this being the value created in half a working hour; and that the price of the overtime working hour is 4d., this being the value created in two-thirds of a working hour. In the former case, the capitalist appropriates a half, in the latter case a third, of the working hour without paying for it.

<sup>1</sup> *Report etc. relative to the Grievances complained of by the Journey-men Bakers*, London, 1862, p. 411, and also in the *Evidence*, nn. 479, 359, and 27.—All the same, the full-priced bakers, as was mentioned above, and as their spokesman, Bennett, himself admits, make their men "generally begin work at 11 p.m., . . . up to 8 o'clock the next morning, . . . they are then engaged all day long, . . . as late as 7 o'clock in the evening". *Op. cit.*, p. 22.



Entered NINETEEN

PIECE-WAGES

WAGES by the piece are nothing but a metamorphosis of wages by time, just as wages by time are a metamorphosis of the value or the price of labour power.

In piece-wages, it seems at first sight as if the use-value purchased from the worker could not be the function of his labour power, living labour, but must be labour already realised in the product; and as if the price of this labour were determined, not as with time-wages by the fraction

daily value of labour power

working day of a given number of hours, but by the producer's capacity for work.<sup>1</sup>

The confidence that leads people to mistake this semblance for reality ought to have been severely shaken by the fact that time-wages and piece-wages can exist side by side in the same branch of industry. For example: "The compositors of London as a general rule work by the piece, time-work being the exception, while those in the country work by the day, the exception being work by the piece. The shipwrights of the port of London work by the job or piece, while those of all other parts work by the day."<sup>2</sup> In the London saddlery shops, we shall often find French workers and English workers employed side by side on the same kind of work, the Frenchmen being paid piece-wages and the Englishmen time-wages. In those factories (in the

<sup>1</sup> "The system of piece-work illustrates an epoch in the history of the working man; it is half way between the position of the mere day labourer depending upon the will of the capitalist, and the cooperative artisan who in the not distant future promises to combine the artisan and the capitalist in his own person. Piece-workers are in fact their own masters, even whilst working upon the capital of the employer." John Watts, *Trade Societies and Strikes, Machinery and Cooperative Societies*, Manchester, 1865, pp. 52-53.—I quote this booklet, because it is a positive cesspool for ancient and rotten apologetic commonplaces. At one time this same Watts traded in Owenism, and in 1842 published a pamphlet entitled *Facts and Fictions of Political Economists*. Among other things he said: "Property is robbery." But that was a long time ago.

<sup>2</sup> T. J. Dunning, *Trades Unions and Strikes*, London, 1860, p. 22.

proper sense of the term) where piece-wages are the general rule, we find that certain occupations are unsuitable for piece-wages, for technical reasons, and that those who carry on such occupations are paid by time.<sup>1</sup> It is self-evident, however, that differences in the form of the payment of wages do not alter the substance, although one form may be more favourable to the development of capitalist production than the other.

The customary working day, let us suppose, is 12 hours, of which 6 hours are paid labour, and 6 hours unpaid. Let the amount of value created be 6s., so that the amount of value created in one working hour will be 6d. Experience shows, let us say, that a worker who works with an average degree of intensity and skill, one who expends nothing more than the socially necessary amount of labour time in the production of an article, produces in 12 hours 24 distinct pieces, or 24 units of measurement of a continuous article. Then the value of these 24 pieces, or units, after we have deducted the portion of constant capital contained in them, is 6s., and the value of a single piece is 3d. The worker receives 1½d. per piece, and thus earns 3s. in 12 hours. Just as in the case of time-wages it does not matter whether we assume the worker to work 6 hours for himself and 6 hours for the capitalist; or half of every hour for himself and the other half for the capitalist: so here it does not matter whether we say that each individual piece is half paid for and half unpaid for; or that the price of 12 pieces replaces the value of the labour power while the other 12 pieces incorporate the surplus value.

The piece-wage form is no less irrational than the time-

<sup>1</sup> The simultaneous existence of piece-wages and time-wages in a factory, favours all sorts of trickery on the part of the factory owner. "A factory employs 400 people, the half of which work by the piece, and have a direct interest in working longer hours. The other 200 are paid by the day, work equally long with the others, and get no more money for their overtime. . . . The work of these 200 people for half an hour a day is equal to one person's work for 50 hours, or five-sixths of one person's labour in a week, and is a positive gain to the employer." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, October 31, 1860, p. 9.—"Overworking to a very considerable extent still prevails; and, in most instances, with that security against detection and punishment which the law itself affords. I have in many former reports shown . . . the injury to workpeople who are not employed on piece-work, but receive weekly wages." Leonard Horner, *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, April 30, 1859, pp. 8-9.

wage form. Whereas, for instance, two pieces of the commodity produced, when the value of the means of production consumed in making them has been subtracted, are worth 6d., as being the product of one hour's labour—all that the worker receives for them is 3d. In actual fact, the piece-wage does not directly express a value relation. It is not a question of measuring the value of the piece by the amount of labour time embodied in it; but, conversely, of measuring the labour expended by the worker, by counting the number of pieces he has produced. In time-wages, the work is measured by its direct duration; in piece-wages, it is measured by the quantity of products into which labour is condensed during a definite period of time.\* The price of the working time is ultimately determined by the equation value of a day's labour = daily value of labour power. Piece-wages, therefore, are nothing more than a modified form of time-wages.

Let us now study somewhat more closely the characteristics of piece-wages.

The quality of the labour is here controlled by the work itself, for the work must be of an average goodness if the piece-price is to be paid in full. From this point of view, piece-wages become a fruitful source of deductions from wages and of capitalist cheating.

To the capitalist, they supply an exact measure for the intensity of labour. Only the labour time which is embodied in a previously determined quantity of commodities (a quantity decided upon as the outcome of experience), counts as socially necessary labour time, and is paid as such. In the larger workshops of the London tailoring trade, therefore, a certain piece of work, such as a waistcoat, is called an hour, or half an hour, as the case may be—the hour being reckoned at 6d. The average product of one hour is known from practical experience. In the case of new fashions, mending work, etc., disputes occur between employer and employed, as to whether a particular piece of work represents an hour, and so on. Here, too, experience decides the question. Similarly in the London furniture workshops. If the worker does not possess the average

\* "Wages can be measured in either of two ways; by the duration of the labour, or by the product of the labour." *Abrégé élémentaire des principes d'économie politique*, Paris, 1796, p. 32.—G. Garnier was the author of this anonymous work.

capacity, if he cannot supply a definite minimum of work in a day, he is dismissed.<sup>1</sup>

Inasmuch as the quality and intensity of the labour are here controlled by the form in which the wages of labour are paid, supervision is to a considerable extent rendered superfluous. Piece-work rates, therefore, form the groundwork of the modern system of domestic industry which was described in the foregoing pages, and also of a hierarchically organised system of exploitation and subjugation. There are two main forms of this latter. On the one hand, piece-wages facilitate the intrusion of parasites between the capitalist and the wage earner, facilitate the subletting of labour. The gains of the intermediaries or middlemen are exclusively derived from the difference between the price of labour paid by the capitalist and the fraction of this price which the middlemen actually allow to get into the hands of the workers.<sup>2</sup> In England, this system is characteristically known as the sweating system. On the other hand, piece-wages enable the capitalist to make a contract for so much per piece with the worker-in-chief (in manufacture, with the chief of a group; in the mines, with the hewer of the coal; in the factory, with the actual worker at the machine), at a price for which the worker-in-chief himself undertakes to recruit and pay his assistant workers. In these cases, the exploitation of the worker by capital is realised by means of the exploitation of one worker by another.<sup>3</sup>

Given the existence of piece-wages, it is, of course, to

<sup>1</sup> "So much weight of cotton is delivered to him [the spinner], and he has to return by a certain time, in lieu of it, a given weight of twist or yarn, of a certain degree of fineness, and he is paid so much per pound for all that he so returns. If his work is defective in quality, the penalty falls on him; if less in quantity than the minimum fixed for a given time, he is dismissed, and an abler operative procured." Ure, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> "It is when work passes through several hands, each of which is to take its share of profits, while only the last does the work, that the pay which reaches the workwoman is miserably disproportioned." *Children's Employment Commission, Second Report*, p. LXX, n. 424.

<sup>3</sup> Even Watts, the apologist, remarks in this connexion: "It would be a great improvement in the system of piece-work, if all the men employed on a job were partners in the contract, each according to his abilities, instead of one man being interested in overworking his fellows for his own benefit." *Op. cit.*, p. 53.—On the abominations of the sweating system, cf. *Children's Employment Commission, Third Report*, p. 66, n. 22; p. 11, n. 124; p. XI, nn. 13, 53, 59; etc.

the personal interest of the worker that he should strain his labour power to the utmost, and this fact enables the capitalist all the more easily to increase the normal degree of intensity of labour.<sup>1</sup> It is, moreover, to the personal interest of the worker that the length of the working day should be increased, since thereby he will be enabled to secure an increase in his daily or weekly wage.<sup>2</sup> As a result, there gradually ensues a reaction like that already described in connexion with time-wages; without reckoning that the prolongation of the working day, even if the piece-wage remains constant, necessarily involves a fall in the price of labour.

When time-wages are paid, we find that, with few exceptions, the same wages are paid for the same kinds of work. When piece-wages prevail, on the other hand, although the price of the working time is measured by a definite quantity of product, the daily wage or weekly wage varies with the individual capacity of the worker, one of whom may only be able to supply a minimum of the product in a given time, while a second can supply the average amount, and a third can supply more than the average.

<sup>1</sup> This spontaneous result is often artificially stimulated. For instance, in the London engineering trade, a common trick is "the selecting of a man who possesses superior physical strength and quickness, as the principal of several workmen, and paying him an additional rate, by the quarter or otherwise, with the understanding that he is to exert himself to the utmost to induce the others, who are only paid the ordinary wages, to keep up to him. . . . Without any comment this will go far to explain many of the complaints of stinting the action, superior skill, and working power, made by the employers against the men." Dunning, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.—Since Dunning is himself a worker, and is secretary of a trade union, this might be regarded as exaggeration. Let the reader, therefore, consult the article "Labourer" in J. C. Morton's *Cyclopaedia of Agriculture*, a "highly respectable" work. He will find that the method in question is there recommended to farmers as an excellent one.

<sup>2</sup> "All those who are paid by piece-work . . . profit by the transgression of the legal limits on work. This observation as to the willingness to work overtime, is especially applicable to the women employed as weavers and reelers." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, April 30, 1858, p. 9.—"This system [piece-work], so advantageous to the employer . . . tends directly to encourage the young potter greatly to overwork himself during the 4 or 5 years during which he is employed in the piece-work system, but at low wages. . . . This is . . . another great cause to which the bad constitutions of the potters are to be attributed." *Children's Employment Commission, First Report*, p. XIII.

Thus the actual sum of money earned will vary very much in different cases, according as the skill, strength, energy, staying power, etc., of the individual worker differs from the average.<sup>1</sup> Of course this does not in any way affect the general relation between capital and wage labour. For, first of all, the individual differences balance one another in the workshop as a whole, so that, in a given period of working time, the workshop produces the average amount of product, and the total of wages paid will correspond to the average wages prevailing in that branch of industry. Secondly, there is no change in the ratio between wages and surplus value, seeing that the individual wage of the individual worker corresponds to the amount of surplus value supplied by him individually. But the wider scope that piece-wage gives to individuality, tends, on the one hand, to develop that individuality, and with it the sense of freedom, the independence, and the self-control of the workers; and tends, on the other, to foster their competition one with another. Piece-work, therefore, while tending to raise the wages of individual workers above the average level of wages in their trade, tends to depress this level as a whole. But where a particular piece-work rate has for a long time been fixed by tradition, so that the lowering of the rate offers exceptional difficulties, the masters will sometimes have recourse to the expedient of compulsorily changing piece-wages into time-wages. That was the cause of the great strike in 1860, among the ribbon weavers of Coventry.<sup>2</sup> Piece-wages, finally, constitute a

<sup>1</sup> "Where the work in any trade is paid for by the piece at so much per job, . . . wages may very materially differ in amount. . . . But in work by the day there is generally a uniform rate . . . recognised by both employer and employed as the standard of wages for the general run of workmen in the trade." Dunning, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> "The work of the journeymen craftsmen will be regulated by the day or by the piece. . . . The master craftsmen know approximately how much work a journeyman craftsman can perform day by day in each occupation, and the pay, consequently, is often decided in proportion to the work done; the journeymen, therefore, work as hard as they possibly can, in pursuit of their own interest, and without the need for any supervision." Cantillon, *Essai sur la nature du commerce en général*, Amsterdam edition, 1756, pp. 185 and 202. The first edition appeared in 1755—Cantillon from whom Quesnay, Sir James Steuart, and Adam Smith have largely drawn, is here already representing piece-wages as simply a modified form of time-wages. The French edition of Cantillon professes in its title to be a translation from the English, but the English edition *The*

main support of the hour system described in the preceding chapter.<sup>1</sup>

The foregoing account makes it clear that piece-wages are the form of wages most suitable to the capitalist method of production. Piece-wages are not a purely modern development, for we find them mentioned side by side with time-wages in such official documents as the French and English labour statutes of the fourteenth century. But payment by piece-rates did not become general until the manufacturing period began. In the storm-and-stress period of large-scale industry, between 1797 and 1815, the system of payment by the piece served as a lever for the elongation of the working day and for forcing down wages. Important materials for the study of the fluctuation of wages during this epoch are to be found in the Blue Books, *Report and Evidence from the Select Committee on Petitions respecting the Corn Laws* (Parliamentary Session of 1813-1814), and *Reports from the Lords' Committee on the State of the Growth, Commerce, and Consumption of Grain, and all Laws relating thereto* (Parliamentary Session of 1814-1815). Here we can find documentary proof of a steady decline in the price of labour from the time when the anti-Jacobin war began. In the weaving industry, for instance, the piece-rate had fallen so low that, despite the increase in the length of the working day, the daily wage became lower than before.

*Analysis of Trade, Commerce, etc.*, by Philip Cantillon, late of the City of London, Merchant, is dated 1759, four years later than the French edition. Besides, the contents of the English edition show it to be a later and revised work. For instance, in the French edition, Hume is not yet mentioned; whereas in the English edition, Petty scarcely figures any more. As far as matters of pure theory are concerned, the English edition is of comparatively little importance; but it contains numerous details specifically concerning English commerce, the bullion trade, etc., which are wanting in the French text. The words on the title page of the English edition, according to which the work is "taken chiefly from the manuscript of a very ingenious gentleman, deceased, and adapted . . . etc.", seem, therefore, to be something more than fiction—though such fictions were common in that day.

<sup>1</sup> "How often do we see, in certain workshops, that the employers engage far more workers than are needed by the work in hand? In many cases, in the expectation of contingent work (which may be altogether imaginary) more workers are taken on. Since they are paid at piece-rates, the employer says to himself that he runs no risk, for the whole loss of time will be at the cost of the unemployed." H. Grégoir, *Les typographes devant le tribunal correctionnel de Bruxelles*, Brussels, 1865, p. 9.

"The real earnings of the cotton weaver are now far less than they were. His superiority over the common labourer, which at first was very great, has now almost entirely ceased. Indeed, . . . the difference in the wages of skilful and common labour is far less now than at any former period."<sup>1</sup> How little advantage the rural proletariat derived from the increased intensity and the wider extension of labour which were associated with the introduction of piece-wages, can be learned from the following passage, quoted from a partisan work championing the cause of the landlords and the farmers: "By far the greater part of agricultural operations is done by people who are hired for the day or on piece-work. Their weekly wages are about 12s., and although it may be assumed that a man earns on piece-work, under the great stimulus to labour, 1s. or perhaps 2s. more than on weekly wages, yet it is found, on calculating his total income, that his loss of employment, during the year, outweighs this gain. . . . Further, it will generally be found that the wages of these men bear a certain proportion to the price of the necessary means of subsistence, so that a man with two children is able to bring up his family without recourse to parish relief."<sup>2</sup> Malthus, referring to the facts published by parliament at this date, wrote: "I can confess that I see with misgiving, the great extension of the practice of piece-wage. Really hard work during 12 or 14 hours of the day, or for any longer time, is too much for any human being."<sup>3</sup>

In the workshops that are brought under the operation of the Factory Acts, piece-wages become the general rule, for in them capital can only get more out of the working day by increasing the intensity of labour.<sup>4</sup>

When the productivity of labour changes, the same quantity of products represents a different amount of labour time. Therewith, consequently, the piece-wage varies, seeing that it is the price expression of a definite amount of labour time. In the above example, 24 pieces

<sup>1</sup> *Remarks on the Commercial Policy of Great Britain*, London, 1815,

<sup>2</sup> *A Defence of the Landowners and Farmers of Great Britain*. London, 1814, pp. 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> Malthus, *Inquiry into the Nature and Progress of Rent*, London, 1815.

<sup>4</sup> "Those who are paid by piece-work, . . . constitute probably four-fifths of the workers in the factories." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, April 30, 1858.



were produced in 12 hours, the value of the product of the 12 hours being 6s., the daily value of the labour power 3s., the price of the labour hour 3d., and the wage per piece 1½d. One half of an hour's labour was embodied in one piece. If now the productivity of labour be doubled, so that a working day of the same length produces 48 pieces instead of 24, all the other circumstances remaining unchanged, the piece-wage will fall from three half-pence to three farthings, since each piece now represents only a quarter of an hour instead of half an hour. Twenty-four times three halfpence is 3s., and in like manner forty-eight times three farthings is 3s. In other words, the piece-wage declines to the same extent that the number of pieces produced in a given period of time grows,<sup>1</sup> or, to phrase it in yet another way, to the extent to which the amount of labour time embodied in each piece diminishes. This change in the piece-wage, so far purely nominal, leads to a perpetual struggle between the capitalist and the worker. This is either because the capitalist uses it as a pretext for actually lowering the price of labour; or else because the increased productivity of labour involves an increase in its intensity. Or it may be because the worker takes the semblance of piece-wages at its face value, believing that what he is paid for is his product and not his labour power, so that he resists a reduction of the piece-rate which is not accompanied by any reduction in the selling price of the commodity. "The operatives . . . carefully watch the price of the raw material and the price of manufactured goods, and are thus enabled

<sup>1</sup> "The productive power of his spinning machine is accurately measured, and the rate of pay for work done with it decreases *with*, though not *as*, the increase of its productive power." Ure, *op. cit.*, p. 317.—Subsequently Ure cancels this last apologetic phrase. He admits that the lengthening of the mule causes some increase in labour. Consequently, the labour does not diminish in the same ratio as its productivity increases. Furthermore: "By this increase, the productive power of the machine will be augmented one-fifth. When this event happens, the spinner will not be paid at the same rate for work done as he was before, but as that rate will not be diminished in the ratio of one-fifth, the improvement will augment his money earnings for any given number of hours' work"; but, he goes on, "the foregoing statement requires a certain modification. . . . The spinner has to pay something additional for juvenile aid out of his additional 6d., accompanied by displacing a portion of adults" (*op. cit.*, p. 321), which is in no way a tendency to raise wages.

to form an accurate estimate of their master's profits."<sup>1</sup> With good reason, the capitalist protests against any such claims, declaring them to be based upon gross errors as to the nature of wage labour.<sup>2</sup> He declaims against the arrogance of this attempt to lay taxes upon the progress of industry, and bluntly declares that the worker has absolutely no concern with the productivity of labour.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Fawcett, *The Economic Position of the British Labourer*, Cambridge and London, 1865, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> In the "Standard" of October 26, 1861, there is a report of an action brought by the firm of John Bright & Company before the Rochdale magistrates "to prosecute for intimidation the agents of the Carpet Weavers Trades Union. Bright's partners had introduced new machinery which would turn out 240 yards of carpet in the time and with the labour[!] previously required to produce 160 yards. The workmen had no claim whatever to share in the profits made by the investment of their employer's capital in mechanical improvements. Accordingly Messrs. Bright proposed to lower the rate of pay from 1½d. per yard to 1d., leaving the earnings of the men exactly the same as before for the same labour. But there was a nominal reduction, of which the operatives, it is asserted, had not fair warning beforehand".

<sup>3</sup> "Trades' Unions, in their desire to maintain wages, endeavour to share in the benefits of improved machinery." [What a preposterous ideal] ". . . The demanding higher wages, because labour is abbreviated, is in other words the endeavour to establish a duty on mechanical improvements." *On Combination of Trades*, new edition, London, 1834, p. 42.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN WAGES

IN Chapter Fifteen, we considered the manifold combinations which may bring about a change, either in the absolute magnitude of the value of labour power, or in its relative magnitude (its magnitude as compared with surplus value); and we showed how, on the other hand, the quantity of the means of subsistence in which the price of the labour power is realised, could experience movements independent of,<sup>1</sup> or different from, variations in this price. As I have already pointed out, the simple translation of the value or the price of labour power into the exoteric form of wages, transmutes all these laws into laws of the movement of wages. That which, in these fluctuations of wages within a single country, appears as a series of varying combinations, may appear, when different countries are compared, as contemporaneous differences in national rates of wages. When, therefore, we institute such a comparison between national rates of wages, we must take into account all the factors that determine changes in the magnitude of the value of labour power. We must take into account: the price and the scope of the prime necessities of life, as naturally and historically developed; the cost of training the workers; the part played by the labour of women and children; the productivity of labour, and its extensive and intensive magnitude. Even the most superficial comparison necessitates, at the outset, a reduction of the average daily wage (as far as one particular industry carried on in various countries is concerned) to a uniform working day. After the daily wages have thus been reduced to the same terms, time-wages must be retranslated into piece-wages, for only these latter can be a measure both of the productivity and of the intensity of labour.

In every country there is an average intensity of labour,

<sup>1</sup> "It is not accurate to say that wages" [the author is speaking here of their monetary expression] "are increased, because they purchase more of a cheaper article." David Buchanan, in his edition of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, London, 1814, vol. I, p. 417, note.

so that, when the labour requisite for the production of a commodity involves the expenditure of more than the necessary amount of social labour time, the labour in question is not reckoned as being of normal quality. Only a degree of intensity above the national average can affect, in a given country, the measurement of the value of labour by the mere duration of the working time. This is not the case as regards the world market, whose integral parts are the individual countries. The average intensity of labour varies from country to country, being greater in one and smaller in another. Thus the national averages form a scale whose unit of measurement is the average unit of universal labour. The more intense national labour, therefore, as compared with the less intense, produces in a given space of time more value, which secures expression in more money.

Furthermore, the international application of the law of value is modified by the fact that in the world market the more productive national labour counts also as more intense, so long as the more productive nation is not forced by competition to reduce the selling price of its commodities to the level of their value.

In proportion as, in any country, capitalist production is developed, to the same extent, in that country, do the national intensity and productivity of labour exceed the international average.<sup>1</sup> The different quantities of commodities of the same kind produced in different countries in the same working time have, therefore, different international values, which secure expression in different prices, that is to say in sums of money which vary according to international values. The relative value of money will, therefore, be smaller in a nation with a more highly developed capitalist method of production than in a nation with a less highly developed capitalist method of production. It follows from this that nominal wages, the equivalent of labour power expressed in money, will likewise be higher in the former nation than in the latter. But it must not be supposed that this necessarily holds good also for real wages, as expressed in the quantity of the means of subsistence placed at the disposal of the worker.

Even apart from these relative differences between the

<sup>1</sup> We shall examine elsewhere what circumstances bearing upon productivity are competent to modify this law as regards individual branches of production.

value of money in the different countries, we shall often find that the daily or weekly wage in the former country is higher than it is in the latter, whilst the relative price of labour, as compared both with surplus value and with the value of the product, is higher in the latter nation than it is in the former.<sup>1</sup>

J. W. Cowell, member of the Factory Commission of 1833, after a careful study of the spinning trade, came to the conclusion that "in England, wages are virtually lower to the capitalist, though higher to the operative, than on the continent of Europe".<sup>2</sup> Factory Inspector Alexander Redgrave, in his report of October 31, 1866, proves by statistics comparing British conditions with those which obtain on the continent of Europe that, notwithstanding lower wages and longer hours of labour, continental labour (considered in relation to the product) is dearer than English. The English manager of a cotton factory in Oldenburg states that the working time there lasts from 5.30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday included, and that the work-people there, under English overlookers, do not supply in this working time quite so much product as the English workers supply in 10 hours. Under German overlookers, they supply much less. Wages are considerably lower than in England, in many cases 50 %; but the number of hands in proportion to the machinery is much greater, in certain departments in the proportion of 5:3.—Mr. Redgrave gives full details as to the Russian cotton factories, the data

<sup>1</sup> In his polemic against Adam Smith, James Anderson writes: "It deserves likewise to be remarked, that although the apparent price of labour is usually lower in poor countries, where the produce of the soil, and grain in general, is cheap; yet it is in fact for the most part really higher than in other countries. For it is not the wages that is given to the labourer per day that constitutes the real price of labour, although it is its apparent price. The real price is that which a certain quantity of work performed actually costs the employer; and, considered in this light, labour is in almost all cases cheaper in rich countries than in those that are poorer, although the price of grain, and other provisions, is usually much lower in the last than in the first. . . . Labour estimated by the day is much lower in Scotland than in England. . . . Labour by the piece is generally cheaper in England." *Observations on the Means of exciting a Spirit of National Industry, etc.*, Edinburgh, 1777, pp. 350-351.—Conversely, lowness of wages produces, in its turn, dearthness of labour: "Labour being dearer in Ireland than it is in England . . . because the wages are so much lower." *Royal Commission on Railways, Minutes*, 1867, n. 2079.

<sup>2</sup> Ure, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

having been supplied to him by an English manager who until recently was at work in Russia. On Russian soil, where infamies are rife, the horrors of the early days of the British factory system are still in full bloom. The managers are, of course, English, for the native Russian capitalist is incompetent in this domain. Despite overwork, which is carried on without pause by day and by night, and despite the scandalous underpayment of the workers, Russian factory production is only able to maintain a precarious existence thanks to the prohibition of foreign competition.—I give, in conclusion, a comparative table furnished by Mr. Redgrave, giving the average number of spindles per factory and per spinner in various European countries. He tells us that these figures were collected a few years back, and that since then the size of the factories and the number of spindles per worker have increased in England. He supposes, however, that in the continental countries mentioned in the table there will have been a proportional advance, so that the numbers given will still have their value for purposes of comparison.

*Average Number of Spindles per Factory*

	<i>Spindles</i>
England, average of spindles per factory . .	12,600
France,                   "                   "                   "	1,500
Prussia,               "               "               "	1,500
Belgium               "               "               "	4,000
Saxony,               "               "               "	4,500
Austria,             "             "             "	7,000
Switzerland,       "           "           "	8,000

*Average Number of Spindles per Person employed*

	<i>Spindles</i>
France .. .. . one person to	14
Russia .. .. . "	28
Prussia .. .. . "	37
Bavaria .. .. . "	46
Austria .. .. . "	49
Belgium .. .. . "	50
Saxony .. .. . "	50
Switzerland .. .. . "	55
Smaller States of Germany .. .. . "	55
Great Britain .. .. . "	74

"This comparison", writes Mr. Redgrave, "is yet more unfavourable to Great Britain, inasmuch as there is so large a number of factories in which weaving by power is carried on in conjunction with spinning", whilst in the table the weavers are not deducted, "and the factories abroad are chiefly spinning factories; if it were possible to compare like with like, strictly, I could find many cotton spinning factories in my district in which mules containing 2200 spindles are minded by one man (the minder) and two assistants only, turning off daily 220 lbs. of yarn, measuring 400 miles in length."<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that in eastern Europe and in Asia, British companies have undertaken the construction of railways, and in these undertakings have employed a certain number of English workers side by side with the native workers. Under stress of practical necessity, they have had to take into account national differences in the intensity of labour, and this has done them no harm. Experience has taught them that, even though the height of the wages corresponds more or less closely with the average intensity of labour, the relative price of labour (the price in relation to the product) generally varies in the inverse direction.

In one of his early economic writings,<sup>2</sup> H. Carey tries to prove that in the different nations the wages are directly proportional to the degree of productivity of the national working day; and from this international relation he draws the conclusion that wages, generally speaking, rise and fall proportionally to the productivity of labour. Our whole analysis of the production of surplus value proves the absurdity of this conclusion—which would be absurd even if Carey had proved the accuracy of his premises, instead of, as his fashion is, being content to lump together a medley of uncritically and superficially sharked-up statistical material. The cream of the joke is that he does not maintain things to be actually as his theory says they ought to be. He tells us that State intervention has falsified the natural economic relations. We must, therefore, calculate the different national wages as if that part of each that goes to the State in the form of taxes really accrued to the

<sup>1</sup> *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, October 31, 1866, pp. 31-33.

<sup>2</sup> *Essay on the Rate of Wages, with an Examination of the Causes of the Differences in the Conditions of the Labouring Population throughout the World*, Philadelphia, 1865.

worker. Would not Mr. Carey do well to enquire whether these "State expenses" are not themselves also the "natural fruits" of capitalist development. The logic is worthy of the man who declared, to begin with, that the capitalist relations of production were eternal laws of nature and reason, whose harmonious free play was only disturbed by State interference; and then went on to discover that England's diabolical influence upon the world market (an influence which, it appears, does not spring from the natural laws of capitalist production) necessitated State intervention—this meaning, that the State must protect these laws of nature and of reason—that, in a word, the State must inaugurate a protective system. Mr. Carey has also discovered that the theorems of Ricardo and others, wherein extant social antagonisms and contradictions are formulated, are not an ideological product of an actual economic movement. On the contrary, says Carey, the actual disharmonies of capitalist production, in England and elsewhere, are the outcome of the Ricardian theory! Finally, he has discovered that in the last resort what destroys the inborn beauties and harmonies of the capitalist method of production is—commerce. One step more, and he will perhaps discover that the one thing wrong with capitalist production is—capital. Only a man so hopelessly uncritical as this, only a man so stuffed with pinchbeck erudition, deserved, despite his protectionist heresies, to become the secret source of the harmonious wisdom of a Bastiat and that of all the other free-trade optimists of the present time.



PART SEVEN

THE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL



## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE conversion of a sum of money into means of production and labour power is the first step taken by the quantum of value that is going to function as capital. The transformation takes place in the market, in the sphere of circulation. The second step, the process of production, is complete as soon as the means of production have been transformed into commodities whose value exceeds that of their constituent parts, and therefore contains the capital primarily expended plus surplus value. These commodities must then be thrown into circulation. They must be sold; their value must be realised in money; the money must again be metamorphosed into capital; and so on, over and over again. This circular movement, in which the same phases are perpetually repeated, constitutes the circulation of capital.

The first condition of accumulation is that the capitalist must have been able to sell his commodities, and to reconvert into capital the greater part of the money so received. In the following pages we shall assume that capital circulates in its normal way. A detailed analysis of the process will be undertaken in Book Two.

The capitalist who produces surplus value—the person who extracts unpaid labour directly from the workers and fixes it in commodities—is, indeed, the first appropriator, but is by no means the last possessor of this surplus value. He has to share it with capitalists who execute other functions in the complex of social production; to share it with landowners; etc. Surplus value, therefore, is subdivided into various parts. Its fractions accrue to various categories of persons, and acquire various mutually independent forms, such as profit, interest, land-rent, etc. These metamorphosed forms of surplus value cannot be considered until we come to Book Three.

Here, then, on the one hand, we assume that the capitalist who produces the commodities, sells them at their value; and we do not delay to consider more fully his reentry into the world market, or to discuss the new forms that capital assumes in the course of its circulation, or to examine the

concrete conditions of production hidden within these forms. On the other hand, we treat the capitalist producer as the owner of all the surplus value; or, if you like to phrase it thus, as the representative of all those who ultimately share the spoils with him. Consequently, we begin by considering accumulation abstractly, as a mere phase in the actual process of production.

So far as accumulation takes place, the capitalist must have succeeded in selling his commodities and in reconverting the purchase money into capital. Furthermore, the breaking-up of surplus value into its various parts does not affect its nature in any way, nor does it affect the conditions under which it becomes an element of accumulation. Whatever proportion of surplus value the capitalist producer is able to keep in his own hands, and whatever proportion he has ultimately to cede to others, to begin with he is the person who appropriates it. What our account of accumulation assumes is, therefore, nothing more than what actually takes place. On the other hand, the simple and basic form of the process of accumulation is obscured by the splitting-up of surplus value, and by the circulatory movement upon which this depends. If the process is to be analysed in all its simplicity, we must, therefore temporarily ignore the various phenomena that conceal the play of its inner mechanism.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### SIMPLE REPRODUCTION

WHATEVER the form of the process of production in a society may be, that process must either be continuous, or else it must pass periodically through the same phases. A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. Regarded as a connected whole and in the perpetual flux of its renewal, every social process of production is, therefore, at the same time a process of reproduction.

The conditions of production are simultaneously the conditions of reproduction. No society can produce, that is to say reproduce, continuously, without continuously reconverting part of its products into means of production or the elements of fresh production. If the circumstances in other respects remain unchanged, it can only reproduce or maintain its wealth at the same level by replacing the means of production (the instruments of labour, the raw materials, and the auxiliary substances) consumed in one year, by an equal quantity of the same kind of articles, which must be detached from the annually produced mass of products and be reincorporated into the process of production. A definite quantity of the annual product belongs, therefore, to production. Designed, from the first for productive consumption, this portion exists mainly in the shape of articles which are totally unfitted for individual consumption.

If the form of production be capitalist, so also will the form of reproduction be capitalist. Just as in the capitalist method of production the labour process appears to be nothing more than a means to achieve the self-expansion of capital; so does reproduction appear to be nothing more than a means of reproducing as capital the value that has been advanced, nothing more than self-expanding value. A person is only termed a capitalist because his money persistently functions as capital. If, for instance, a sum of £100 has this year been transformed into capital, and has produced a surplus value of £20, then it must repeat the same operation next year, and thenceforward. As a period:

increment of capitalised value, or as a periodic fruit of capital in a state of flux, surplus value acquires the form of a revenue arising out of capital.<sup>1</sup>

If this revenue serves the capitalist only as a fund for consumption, if it is consumed periodically as well as being produced periodically, then, other circumstances remaining as before, there is nothing but simple reproduction. Although simple reproduction is merely a repetition of the process of production on the old scale, yet this repetition, or the continuity of the process, gives that process certain new characteristics, or, rather, leads to the disappearance of certain ostensible characteristics which it possessed as an isolated process.

The process of production is initiated by the purchase of labour power for a definite period, the initiation being perpetually renewed when the term for which the labour power has been bought expires, and when, therefore, a definite productive period, a week, a month, etc., as the case may be, is finished. But the worker is not paid until his labour power has been exercised, and has realised, in the form of commodities, not only its own value but surplus value as well. The worker, therefore, has produced, not only surplus value (which, for the present, we regard merely as a fund to meet the private consumption of the capitalist); he has also produced, before it flows back to him in the form of wages, the fund out of which he himself is paid, the variable capital; and he only secures employment as long as he continues to reproduce this fund. That explains the

<sup>1</sup> "But these wealthy persons who consume the products of others' labour, cannot obtain these products except by means of exchanges [purchases of commodities]. If, however, they give their acquired and accumulated wealth in return for these new products for which they have a fancy, they seem exposed to the danger of having their reserve funds speedily exhausted. I have said that they do not work, and are even unable to work. It might be supposed, therefore, that day by day their store of wealth would dwindle, and that when the storehouse was empty, they would have nothing more to offer in exchange to the workers in order to induce these to work exclusively for them. . . . But in our social system wealth has acquired the property of reproducing itself by means of others' labour, without any contribution to that labour on the part of the owner. Wealth, like labour and by means of labour, bears an annual fruit which can be destroyed each year without the owner of wealth becoming poorer. This fruit is the *revenue* which is born out of *capital*." Sismondi, *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique*, Paris, 1819, vol. I, pp. 81-82.

formula of the economists to which we referred in Chapter Sixteen under head 2, according to which wages are to be regarded as a share in the product itself.<sup>1</sup> What is continually flowing back to the worker in the form of wages is a portion of the product that is continually being reproduced by him. True, the capitalist pays him the commodity value in money, but this money is only a metamorphosed form of the product of labour. While the worker is transforming part of the means of production into product, part of his earlier product is being retransformed into money. What pays for his labour to-day, or during the next six months, is his labour of last week or of the last six months. The illusion begotten by the money form disappears instantly if, instead of contemplating a single capitalist and a single worker, we contemplate the capitalist class and the working class as a whole. The capitalist class is continually giving to the working class delivery orders in the money form, delivery orders which enable the workers to secure for themselves part of the products which they themselves have produced and which the capitalist class has appropriated. These delivery orders are no less continually handed back by the workers to the capitalist class, and in this way the workers acquire whatever share of their own products accrues to them. But the real nature of the transaction is masked by the commodity form of the product and the money form of the commodity.

Variable capital, therefore, is nothing more than a particular historical phenomenal form of the fund for providing the necessities of life, or the labour fund which the worker needs for his own maintenance and reproduction—a fund which he must himself continually produce and reproduce, whatever may be the system of social production. If the labour fund constantly flows to him in the form of money that pays for his labour this is because his own product constantly flows away from him in the form of capital. But the fact that the labour fund assumes this phenomenal form does not affect the other fact, that what is advanced to the worker by the capitalist is only the worker's own

<sup>1</sup> "Wages as well as profits are to be considered each of them as really a portion of the finished product." Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 142.—"The share of the product which comes to the labourer in the form of wages." James Mill, *Elements of Political Economy*, French translation, Paris, 1823, p. 34.

labour, realised in a product.<sup>1</sup> Let us consider the case of a serf liable to the *corvée*. We will suppose that for three days in each week he works on his own plot of land with his own means of production, and that for three other days in the week he does forced labour on his lord's domain. He is continually reproducing his own labour fund, and in relation to him this fund never takes the form of a money payment for his labour, advanced by another person. On the other hand, his unpaid forced labour for his lord never assumes the aspect of voluntary and paid labour. If, one fine morning, the lord of the soil appropriates the serf's plot of land, the latter's horse or ox, his seed-corn—in a word, his means of production—then the serf has henceforward no option but to sell his labour power to the lord. Other things being equal, he will continue, as in the past, to work three days a week for himself and three days a week for the man who was his seigneurial lord and has now become a wage-paying lord. Now, as before, he will use up the means of production as means of production, and will transfer their value to the product. Now, as before, a special portion of the product will be assigned to reproduction. But from the moment that the forced labour is changed into wage labour, the labour fund (which the peasant continues to produce and reproduce) takes the form of capital advanced to him in the shape of wages by the lord. The bourgeois economist whose narrow mind is unable to separate the phenomenal form from the underlying reality, shuts his eyes to the fact that, even to-day, it is only here and there upon the surface of the globe that the labour fund takes the form of capital.<sup>2</sup>

It is true that variable capital only loses its character of being a value advanced out of the capitalist's funds,<sup>3</sup> when

<sup>1</sup> "When capital is employed in advancing to the workman his wages, it adds nothing to the funds for the maintenance of labour." Cazenove in note to his edition of Malthus' *Definitions in Political Economy*, London, 1853, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> "The wages of labour are advanced by capitalists in the case of less than one-fourth of the labourers of the earth." Richard Jones, *Textbook of Lectures on the Political Economy of Nations*, Hertford, 1852, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> "Though the manufacturer" [this means the worker engaged in manufacture] "has his wages advanced to him by his master, he in reality costs him no expense, the value of these wages being generally reserved, together with a profit, in the improved value of the subject upon which his labour is bestowed." Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, Book II, chap. III, p. 311.



we contemplate the process of capitalist production in the flux of its constant renewal; but that process must have had a beginning somewhere and at some time. From our present standpoint, therefore, it seems likely that the capitalist, once upon a time, became the owner of money thanks to some kind of primary accumulation independent of the unpaid labour of other persons; and that this primary accumulation was what enabled him to step into the market as a purchaser of labour power. However this may be, the mere continuity of the capitalist process of production, or the process of simple reproduction, brings about some other remarkable changes, which affect, not only the variable capital, but also the aggregate capital.

Let us suppose that a capital of £1000 begets periodically (yearly, for instance) surplus value amounting to £200; and let us further suppose that this surplus value is consumed every year. It is then obvious that, after the process has been repeated for five years, the total amount of surplus value that has been consumed is  $5 \times £200$ , a sum equal to the capital originally advanced, namely £1000. But if the annual supply of surplus value be consumed only in part, to the extent of one-half, let us say, then the same result will be secured after the process of production has been repeated ten years in succession, for  $£100 \times 10$  equals £1000. In general terms, the value of the capital advanced divided by the surplus value annually consumed, gives the number of years, or reproduction periods, at the expiration of which the capital originally advanced has been consumed by the capitalist and has disappeared. Although the capitalist's idea is that he consumes the product of others' unpaid labour, namely surplus value, and keeps his original capital intact, what he thinks cannot alter the facts. After the lapse of a certain number of years, the capital value appropriated by him is equal to the sum total of the surplus value appropriated by him without equivalent during those years, and the total he has consumed is equal to that of his original capital. It is true that he has in his hands a capital whose amount has not altered, and that part of this (buildings, machinery, etc.) already existed when he started in business. But what we are concerned with here is the value of the capital, and not with the material constituents of the capital. When any one runs through all his property by incurring debts to the value thereof, then this property of

his represents only the sum total of his debts. So it is with the capitalist who has consumed the equivalent of the capital advanced, for the value of his present capital represents nothing but the total amount of the surplus value he has appropriated without payment. Not a single atom of the value of his old capital continues to exist.

Quite apart, therefore, from any accumulation, the mere continuity of the process of production, or in other words simple reproduction, necessarily ends, sooner or later, in the conversion of every capital into accumulated, or capitalised, surplus value. Even though, when this capital made its entry into the process of production, it may have been property acquired by the personal labour of its owner, sooner or later it becomes value appropriated without an equivalent, the unpaid labour of others materialised either in money or in some other form.

We saw in Chapter Four that, for the conversion of money into capital, something more is needed than the mere production of value and the circulation of commodities. We saw that there must confront one another as buyer and seller: here the owner of value or money, there the owner of value-creating substance; here the owner of the means of production and the means of subsistence, there the owner whose sole property is his labour power. We saw that the starting-point of capitalist production, its actual basis, was a divorce of labour from the product of labour, a divorce of subjective labour power from the objective conditions of labour.

But that which was at first no more than a starting-point, becomes, thanks to the mere continuity of the process, thanks to simple reproduction, the peculiar result, perpetually renewed and eternalised, of capitalist production. On the one hand, the process of production incessantly converts material wealth into capital, into means of creating more wealth and means of enjoyment for the capitalist. On the other hand, the worker is perpetually coming out of the process what he was when he entered it—a source of wealth for others, but himself destitute of all the means which would enable him to acquire wealth for himself. Since, before he enters the process, his own labour has been alienated from himself, has been appropriated by the capitalist and incorporated into capital, it necessarily, during the process of production, is continually being

materialised in a product which belongs to another. Inasmuch as the process of production is also the process by means of which the capitalist consumes labour power, the product of the worker is incessantly being transformed, not only into commodities, but also into capital, into value that sucks the value-creating power dry, into means of subsistence that buy persons, into means of production that make use of the producer.<sup>1</sup> The worker, therefore, is constantly producing objective wealth in the form of capital, in the form of a power which is alien to him, controls him, and exploits him; and the capitalist, no less constantly, produces labour power, but in the form of a subjective source of wealth, a source that exists only in the abstract corporeality of the worker, who is divorced from the objects in and which it can alone be realised—in short, he produces the worker as a wage worker.<sup>2</sup> This continuous reproduction or eternalisation of the worker is an indispensable condition of capitalist production.

The worker's consumption is of a twofold kind. In the process of production, by means of his labour he consumes means of production, and transforms them into products which have a higher value than that of the capital advanced. This is his productive consumption. Simultaneously, it is the consumption of his labour power by the capitalist who has bought it. On the other hand, the worker buys means of subsistence with the money paid for his labour power; this is his individual consumption. Thus the worker's productive consumption and his individual consumption are utterly different. In the former, he acts as the motive force of capital, and belongs to the capitalist. In the latter he belongs to himself, and carries on vital functions independently of the process of production. The result of the

\* "This is a remarkably peculiar property of productive labour. Whatever is productively consumed is capital, and it becomes capital by consumption." James Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 242.—James Mill, however, never got to the bottom of the meaning of this "remarkably peculiar property".

<sup>1</sup> "It is true, indeed, that the first introducing a manufacture employs many poor, but they cease not to be so, and the continuance of it makes many." *Reasons for a Limited Exportation of Wool*, London, 1677, p. 19. "The farmer now absurdly asserts that he keeps the poor. They are indeed kept in misery." *Reasons for the late Increase of the Poor Rate, or a Comparative View of the Prices of Labour and Provisions*, London, 1777, p. 37.

former is the life of the capitalist, the result of the latter is the worker's own life.

Our study of the working day and associated topics shows us that the worker is often compelled to make his individual consumption a mere incident in the process of production. In such a case, he supplies himself with means of subsistence in order to keep his labour power going, just as a steam-engine is supplied with coal and water, or a wheel is supplied with lubricating oil. If this be so, his means of consumption are merely the means of consumption of a means of production, and his individual consumption is directly productive consumption. But this appears to be an abuse not essentially appertaining to the capitalist process of production.<sup>1</sup>

The matter assumes a different aspect when we contemplate, not the individual capitalist and the individual worker, but the capitalist class and the working class; not the isolated process of producing this or that commodity, but capitalist production in full swing and on a social scale.

When a capitalist converts part of his capital into labour power, he thereby augments his total capital. He kills two birds with one stone. He profits, not only by what he receives from the worker, but by what he gives to the worker. The capital given in exchange for labour power is converted into necessities of life, and the consumption of these serves to renovate, to reproduce as it were, the muscles, nerves, bones, and brains of existing workers, and to promote the begetting of new workers. Within the limits of what is absolutely necessary, therefore, the individual consumption of the working class is the reconversion of the means of subsistence given by capital in exchange for labour power, into fresh labour power ready for capitalist exploitation. It is the production and reproduction of the worker himself, the worker who is the means of production most indispensable of all to the capitalist. The individual consumption of the worker, whether within or without the workshop or the factory, whether within or without the labour process, forms, therefore, a factor of the production and reproduction of capital; just as is the cleaning of machinery, whether it be done during the labour process or during a pause in the

<sup>1</sup> Rossi would not declaim so emphatically against this, had he really penetrated the secret of "productive consumption".

labour process. The fact that the worker consumes the means of subsistence to please himself and not to please the capitalist is irrelevant. A horse or an ox used in farmwork no doubt enjoys what it eats, but none the less its consumption of food is a necessary factor in the process of production. The continuous maintenance and reproduction of the working class is a permanently necessary condition for the reproduction of capital. The capitalist can safely leave the fulfilment of this condition to the worker's own instinct of self-preservation and to his reproductive impulse. All that the capitalist need concern himself about is to keep the worker's individual consumption down to the necessary minimum, and he would never dream of such brutality as that of the South American mineowners who compel the workers to eat more substantial rather than less substantial kinds of food.<sup>1</sup>

Hence both the capitalist and his ideological representative, the political economist, consider that part only of the worker's individual consumption to be productive, which is requisite for the perpetuation of the working class, and which must therefore take place in order that capital may have labour power to consume. Anything over and above this, which the worker may consume for his own pleasure, is unproductive consumption.<sup>2</sup> If the accumulation of capital were to cause a rise of wages and an increase in the worker's consumption unaccompanied by any increase in the consumption of labour power by capital, the additional capital would be unproductively consumed.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the worker's individual consumption is unproductive as far as he himself is concerned, since it reproduces nothing but the needy individual; it is productive for the capitalist and the State,

<sup>1</sup> "The workers in the South American mines, whose daily task (perhaps the most arduous in the world) is to bring to the surface on their shoulders loads of ore weighing from 180 to 200 lbs., from a depth of 450 feet, live only on bread and beans. For their part they would prefer the bread alone, but their masters, who have found out that the men cannot work so hard on bread, treat them like horses, and compel them to eat beans; for beans are relatively much richer in bone-earth (phosphate of lime) than bread is." Liebig, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 194, note.

<sup>2</sup> James Mill, *op. cit.*, pp. 238 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> "If the price of labour should rise so high that, notwithstanding the increase of capital, no more could be employed, I should say that such increase of capital would be still unproductively consumed." Ricardo, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

since it is the production of the power that creates wealth for another than the worker.<sup>1</sup>

From a social point of view, therefore, the working class, even when not directly engaged in the labour process, is just as much an appurtenance of capital as is the inanimate instrument of labour. Even its individual consumption is, within certain limits, nothing more than a factor in the process of the reproduction of capital. But good care is taken to prevent these conscious instruments of production from leaving that process in the lurch, for their product is removed as fast as it is made, from the workers' pole to its antipodes, the capitalist's pole. Individual consumption provides, on the one hand, for their maintenance and reproduction; on the other hand, by the annihilation of the necessities of life, it provides for their continuous reappearance in the labour market. In the days of classical Rome, the slave was bound in chains; the wage worker is bound to his owner by invisible threads. The appearance of independence is kept up by means of the perpetual change from one wage lord to another, and by the legal fiction of the contract.

In former times, capital resorted to legislation whenever it was necessary for it to enforce its proprietary rights upon the free worker. For instance, down to 1815, the emigration of mechanics employed in machinemaking was, in England, forbidden under grievous penalties.

The reproduction of the working class comprises also the accumulation of skill and its handing down from one generation to another.<sup>2</sup> Directly a crisis threatens the capitalist with loss, we see to how great an extent he regards the existence of a skilled working class as one of the factors of production which belong to him by right, and to what an extent he actually regards it as the essential reality of his variable capital. As every one knows, in consequence of the

<sup>1</sup> "The only productive consumption, properly so called, is the consumption or destruction of wealth" [the writer means the consumption of the means of production] "by capitalists with a view to reproduction. . . . The workman . . . is a productive consumer to the person who employs him, and to the State, but not, strictly speaking, to himself." Malthus, *Definitions*, etc., p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> "The only thing which can be said to be stored up or prepared previously is the skill of the labourer. . . . The accumulation and storage of skilled labour, this most important operation, is, as regards the great mass of labourers, performed without any circulating capital whatever." Thomas Hodgskin, *Labour defended*, etc., pp. 12-13.

American Civil War and the accompanying cotton famine, most of the cotton operatives in Lancashire, etc., were thrown out of work. Both from the working class itself and from other strata of society there then arose a cry for State aid, or for voluntary subscriptions on a national scale, in order to help the "superfluous hands" to emigrate to British colonies or to the United States. Thereupon the "Times" under date March 24, 1863, published a letter from Edmund Potter, sometime chairman of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. In the House of Commons, this letter was aptly described as the manufacturers' manifesto.<sup>1</sup> I quote here some characteristic passages, in which the proprietary rights of capital over labour power are unblushingly asserted. The pronoun "he" with which the quotation begins means the unemployed cotton worker.

"He may be told the supply of cotton workers is too large . . . and . . . must . . . in fact be reduced by a third, perhaps, and that then there will be a healthy demand for the remaining two-thirds. . . . Public opinion . . . urges emigration. . . . The master cannot willingly see his labour supply being removed; he may think, and perhaps justly, that it is both wrong and unsound. . . . But if the public funds are to be devoted to assist emigration, he has a right to be heard, and perhaps to protest." Mr. Potter then shows how useful the cotton trade is; how the "trade has undoubtedly drawn the surplus population from Ireland and from the agricultural districts"; how immense is its extent; how in the year 1860 it yielded five-thirteenths of the total English exports; how, after a few years, it will again expand by the extension of the market, particularly of the Indian market, and by calling forth a plentiful supply of cotton at 6d. per lb. He then continues: "Some time . . . one, two, or three years, it may be, will produce the quantity. . . . The question I would put then is this—Is the trade worth retaining? Is it worth while to keep the machinery" [he means the living labour machines] "in order, and is it not the greatest folly to think of parting with that? I think it is. I allow that the workers are not a property, not the property of Lancashire and the masters; but they are the strength of both; they are the mental and trained

<sup>1</sup> "That letter might be looked upon as the manifesto of the manufacturers." Ferrand, Motion on the Cotton Famine, House of Commons, April 27, 1863.

power which cannot be replaced for a generation; the mere machinery which they work might much of it be beneficially replaced, nay improved, in a twelvemonth.\* Encourage or allow [!] the working power to emigrate, and what of the capitalist? . . . Take away the cream of the workers, and fixed capital will depreciate in a great degree, and the floating will not subject itself to a struggle with the short supply of inferior labour. . . . We are told the workers wish it" [emigration]. "Very natural it is that they should do so. . . . Reduce, compress the cotton trade by taking away its working power and reducing their wages expenditure, say one-fifth, or five millions, and what then would happen to the class above, the small shopkeepers; and what of the rents, the cottage rents. . . . Trace out the effects upward to the small farmer, the better householder, and . . . the landowner, and say if there could be any suggestion more suicidal to all classes of the country than by enfeebling a nation by exporting the best of its manufacturing population, and destroying the value of some of its most productive capital and enrichment. . . . I advise a loan (of five of six millions sterling), . . . extending it may be over two or three years, administered by special commissioners added to the Boards of Guardians in the cotton districts, under special legislative regulations, enforcing some occupation or labour, as a means of keeping up at least the moral standard of the recipients of the loan. . . . Can anything be worse for landowners or masters than parting with the best of the workers, and demoralising and disappointing the rest by an extended depletive emigration, a depletion of capital and value in an entire province?"

Potter, the mouthpiece of the cotton lords, distinguishes between two sorts of "machinery", each of which belongs to the capitalist. One of them is fixed in his factory; the other, during the night hours and on Sundays, is housed outside the factory, in cottages. One of them is inanimate, the other is alive. The inanimate machinery does not only undergo wear and tear, and thus depreciate from day to day; but a great part of it gets out of date so quickly owing to the continuous advance in technique, that after a few months have passed it can advantageously be replaced by

\* It will not be forgotten that (as we saw on p. 452) this same capital sings quite another song, under ordinary circumstances, when there is a question of reducing wages.



new machinery. The living machinery, on the other hand, gets better the longer it lasts, and in proportion as the skill handed down from generation to generation accumulates. The "Times" answered the cotton magnate as follows:

"Mr. Edmund Potter is so impressed with the exceptional and supreme importance of the cotton masters that, in order to preserve this class and perpetuate their profession, he would keep half a million of the labouring class confined in a great moral workhouse against their will. 'Is the trade worth retaining?' asks Mr. Potter. 'Certainly by all honest means it is', we answer. 'Is it worth keeping the machinery in order?' again asks Mr. Potter. Here we hesitate. By the 'machinery' Mr. Potter means the human machinery, for he goes on to protest that he does not mean to use them as an absolute property. We must confess that we do not think it 'worth while', or even possible, to keep the human machinery in order—that is to shut it up and keep it oiled till it is wanted. Human machinery *will* rust under inaction, oil and rub it as you may. Moreover, the human machinery will, as we have just seen, get the steam up of its own accord, and burst or run amuck in our great towns. It might, as Mr. Potter says, require some time to reproduce the workers; but, having machinists and capitalists at hand, we could always find thrifty, hard, industrious men wherewith to improvise more master manufacturers than we can ever want. Mr. Potter talks of the trade reviving 'in one, two, or three years', and he asks us not 'to encourage or allow the working power to emigrate'. He says that it is very natural the workers should wish to emigrate; but he thinks that, in spite of their desire, the nation ought to keep this half million of workers with their 700,000 dependents, shut up in the cotton districts; and, as a necessary consequence, he must of course think that the nation ought to keep down their discontent by force, and sustain them by alms—and upon the chance that the cotton masters may some day want them. . . . The time is come when the great public opinion of these islands must operate to save this 'working power' from those who would deal with it as they would deal with iron, and coal, and cotton."

The "Times" article was not meant to be taken seriously. The "great public" was, in fact, of the same opinion as Mr. Potter, to the effect that the factory operatives are part of the movable fittings of the factory. Their emigration was

prevented.<sup>1</sup> They were locked up in the "moral workhouse" of the cotton districts, and they continue to form "the strength" of the cotton masters of Lancashire.

The capitalist process of production thus reproduces, of its own accord, the divorce of labour power from the means of labour. It reproduces and eternalises, therewith, the conditions for the exploitation of the worker. It perpetually forces the worker to sell his labour power that he may live, while perpetually enabling the capitalist to purchase labour power that he may enrich himself.<sup>2</sup>

The confrontation of capitalist and worker in the commodity market as buyer and seller, is no longer a matter of chance. The process of production itself plays this trick by which one of the two is continually being thrust back into the commodity market as seller of his labour power, and in virtue of which this one's own product is continually becoming the means by which the other can purchase him. In reality, the worker belongs to capital before he sells himself to the capitalist. His economic bondage<sup>3</sup> is at once

<sup>1</sup> Parliament did not vote a single farthing on behalf of emigration, being content to pass laws which enabled the municipalities to keep the operatives in a condition betwixt life and death, or to exploit them without paying the normal rate of wages. When, three years later, the cattle plague broke out, parliament hastened to disregard its own traditions, and in the twinkling of an eye voted millions to indemnify the millionaire landlords, whose farmers in any case escaped loss owing to the rise in the price of meat. The bestial lowing of the landowners at the opening of parliament in 1866 showed that a man can worship the cow Sabala without being a Hindu, and can change himself into an ox without being Jupiter.

<sup>2</sup> "The worker asked for subsistence, that he might live; the master asked for labour, that he might make profit." Sismondi, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> A boorish blunt form of such bondage is to be met with in the county of Durham. This is one of the few counties where circumstances do not give the farmer unrestricted proprietary rights over the agricultural labourer, for the existence of the mining industry in that part of the world gives the labourer a certain freedom of choice. In Durham, therefore, the farmer (contrary to the custom elsewhere) only rents farms which have on them labourers' cottages. The rent of the cottage is part of the wages. These cottages are known as "hinds' houses". They are let in consideration of certain feudal services, under a contract called "bondage", which, among other things, binds the labourer, during the period in which he takes employment elsewhere, to provide his daughter or some other person as a substitute. The labourer is termed a "bondsmen". The relation we are now considering also shows how the labourer's individual consumption becomes consumption on behalf of capital, or productive

caused and hidden by the periodical renewal of his sale of himself, by the change from one wage lord to another, and by the fluctuations in the market price of labour.<sup>1</sup>

The capitalist process of production regarded as a connected whole, or as a process of reproduction, therefore produces, not only commodities, not only surplus value, for it also produces and reproduces the capitalist relation itself; produces and reproduces, on one side the capitalist, and on the other the wage worker.<sup>2</sup>

consumption; and it shows this in an entirely new aspect. "It is curious to observe that the very dung of the hind and bondsman is the perquisite of the calculating lord; . . . and the lord will allow no privy but his own to exist in the neighbourhood, and will rather give a bit of manure here and there for a garden than bate any part of his seigniorial right." *Public Health, Seventh Report*, 1864, p. 188.

<sup>1</sup> The reader will remember that in respect of the labour of children, etc., even the formality of a voluntary sale disappears.

<sup>2</sup> "Capital presupposes wage labour, and wage labour presupposes capital. One is a necessary condition of the existence of the other; they mutually call one another into existence. Does an operative in a cotton factory produce nothing beyond cotton goods? No, he produces capital. He produces values which give fresh command over his labour, and, through the instrumentality of such command, create fresh values." Karl Marx, *Lohnarbeit und Kapital*, (Wage Labour and Capital), in the "Neue Rheinische Zeitung", No. 266, April 7, 1849.—The articles published under the above title in the "Neue Rheinische Zeitung" are parts of some lectures given by me on that subject in the year 1847 to the members of the German Workers' Society of Brussels. Their publication was interrupted by the February revolution.

TRANSFORMATION OF SURPLUS VALUE INTO  
CAPITALI. CAPITALIST PRODUCTION ON A PROGRESSIVELY IN-  
CREASING SCALE. METAMORPHOSIS OF THE LAWS  
OF PROPERTY THAT CHARACTERISE COMMODITY  
PRODUCTION INTO THE LAWS OF CAPITALIST  
APPROPRIATION.

At an earlier stage we considered how surplus value originates from capital; now we have to consider how capital originates from surplus value. The use of surplus value as capital, or the reconversion of surplus value into capital, is termed the *accumulation of capital*.<sup>1</sup>

Let us first examine this process from the standpoint of the individual capitalist. Suppose that the owner of a spinning mill has advanced a capital of £10,000, four-fifths of which have been devoted to the purchase of cotton, machinery, etc., and the remaining one-fifth to the payment of wages. We will assume that the annual produce of the factory amounts to 240,000 lbs. of yarn, having a value of £12,000. If the rate of surplus value be 100 %, the surplus value resides in the surplus product or net product of 40,000 lbs. of yarn, being one-sixth of the gross product, and having a value of £2000, which will be realised by its sale. The sum of £2000 is just £2000. In this sum of money, we can neither see nor smell that it is surplus value. When we know that a particular value is surplus value, we know how its owner came by it, but this does not change the nature of the value or of the money with which we are concerned.

The master spinner who wishes to convert this additional sum of £2000 into capital, will, all the other circumstances remaining as before, expend four-fifths of it (£1600) in the purchase of cotton, etc., and one-fifth (£400) in the purchase

<sup>1</sup> "Accumulation of capital; the employment of a portion of revenue as capital." Malthus, *Definitions*, etc., Cazenove's edition, p. 11.—"Conversion of revenue into capital." Malthus, *Principles of Political Economy*, second edition, London, 1836, p. 319.

of additional cotton operatives, and these will supply themselves in the market with the necessaries of life whose value the master spinner has advanced to them. Then the new capital to the amount of £2000 will function in the spinning mill, and will, in its turn, produce a surplus value of £400.

The capital value was originally advanced in the money form. The surplus value, on the other hand, exists originally as the value of a definite portion of the gross product. When this is sold, is transformed into money, the capital value regains its original form, but the surplus value sheds its original form to assume that of money. Thenceforward, both the capital value and the surplus value are sums of money, and their retransformation into capital occurs in precisely the same way. Both of them are utilised by the capitalist for the purchase of commodities which will enable him to recommence the fabrication of his goods, this time upon a more extended scale. But, if he is to buy these commodities, they must exist in the market.

His own yarns circulate only because he brings his annual product to market, just as all the other capitalists do with their commodities. But these commodities, before they came into the market, already existed as part of the general annual product, as part of the aggregate of objects of every kind, into which the sum of the individual capitals, or the total capital of society, had been converted in the course of the year, and of which each individual capitalist has only an aliquot part in his own hands. The transactions in the market serve only to bring about the interchange of the individual components of this annual product, transferring them from one hand to another; but they cannot increase the total annual product, nor can they change the nature of the objects that have been produced. The use that can be made of the total annual product depends, therefore, upon the composition of that product; it does not depend upon circulation.

The annual production must, in the first place, provide all the objects (the use-values) by means of which the material components of capital that have been used up in the course of the year can be replaced. Deducting these, we get the net product or surplus product, in which the surplus value resides. Of what does this surplus product consist? Perhaps of things destined to satisfy the wants and the

desires of the capitalist class, things which form part of the consumption of that class? Were this all, the cup of surplus value would be drained to the lees, and nothing but simple reproduction would ever occur.

If accumulation is to take place, part of the surplus product must be transformed into capital. But, short of a miracle, only those things can be transformed into capital which are utilisable in the labour process (i.e. the means of production), and in addition such articles as are suitable for the maintenance of the worker (i.e. the means of subsistence). Consequently, part of the annual surplus labour must have been applied to the production of supplementary means of production and means of subsistence, over and above the quantity that was requisite for the replacement of the capital advanced. In a word, surplus value is only convertible into capital, because the surplus product whose value it is, already contains the material constituents of new capital.<sup>\*</sup>

If these constituents are actually to function as capital, the capitalist class must have an additional supply of labour. Unless the exploitation of the workers already employed is to be increased either extensively or intensively, supplementary sources of labour power must be tapped. The mechanism of capitalist production has already provided for this emergency, inasmuch as capitalism sees to it that the working class shall reproduce itself as a class dependent on wages, but as one whose members' customary wages suffice, not merely for their own maintenance, but also for their increase. It is only necessary for capital to incorporate this additional labour power annually supplied by the working class in the shape of workers of all ages, with the surplus means of production already comprised in the annual product, and the transformation of surplus value into capital is complete. From a concrete outlook, accumulation resolves itself into the reproduction of capital on a progressively increasing scale. Simple reproduction moved in a circle;

\* For the purposes of the present argument we ignore export trade, by means of which a nation can transform articles of luxury into means of production or means of subsistence, and conversely. If we are to examine our topic in its integrity, without disturbance by subsidiary circumstances, we must, for the nonce, treat the whole world as one nation, must assume that capitalist production is everywhere established and has got possession of all branches of industry.

but now, to use Sismondi's expression, this circle has been changed into a spiral.<sup>1</sup>

Now let us turn to our example. It is the old story: Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, and so on. The original capital of £10,000 brings in a surplus value of £2000, which is capitalised. The new capital of £12,000 brings in a surplus value of £400; this, capitalised in its turn, transformed into a second supply of additional capital, brings in further surplus value amounting to £80, and so on.

At present we are disregarding whatever portion of the surplus value is consumed by the capitalist. Nor, for the moment, are we interested in the question whether the additional capital is tacked on to the original capital, or is applied separately to an independent process of expansion. It does not matter to us whether the capitalist who has accumulated it makes use of it, or whether he hands it over to others. What we have to bear in mind is that, side by side with the newly formed increments of capital, the original capital continues to reproduce itself and to produce surplus value; and that the same is true of every portion of accumulated capital in relation to the additional capital it engenders.

The original capital was formed by an advance of £10,000. How did the owner get this sum? The spokesmen of political economy are unanimous in their answer. One and all, they tell us that he obtained it "by his own labour and that of his forefathers".<sup>2</sup> In fact, their assumption seems to be the only one accordant with the laws of commodity production.

But it is otherwise with regard to the additional capital of £2000. We know perfectly well how this came into being. It is capitalised surplus value. From the outset, it does not contain a single atom of value which is not derived from unpaid labour. The means of production with which the additional labour power is incorporated, and also the means of subsistence whereby the workers are maintained, are nothing other than component parts of the surplus product, of the tribute annually exacted from the working class by the capitalist class. When the capitalist class uses part of

<sup>1</sup> Sismondi's analysis of accumulation suffers from this grave defect, that he is too ready to content himself with the phrase "conversion of revenue into capital", without trying to fathom the material conditions that underlie this operation.

<sup>2</sup> "The primary labour to which the birth of his capital was due." Sismondi, *op. cit.*, Paris edition, vol. I, p. 109.

the tribute drawn from the working class in order to buy additional labour power (even at the full price, so that equivalent is exchanged for equivalent), it is merely following the ancient example of the conqueror who, when he buys goods from the conquered, pays for these goods with money of which the vanquished have previously been robbed.

If the additional capital gives employment to the person who produced it, this producer has not only to continue the work of increasing the value of the original capital, but must also buy back the fruits of his previous labour with more labour than they cost. Contemplated as a transaction between the capitalist class and the working class, it makes no difference whatever that additional workers are employed by means of the unpaid labour of the workers previously in employment. Maybe the capitalist will convert the additional capital into a machine which will throw the producers of the additional capital out of work, their place being taken by a few children. In any case, by its surplus labour this year, the working class creates the capital that will next year employ additional labour.<sup>1</sup> This is what people really mean when they say that capital creates capital, that money breeds money.

The accumulation of the first additional capital amounting to £2000 presupposed that the capitalist had, to begin with, put up a sum of £10,000 which belonged to him in virtue of his "primary labour". But the presupposition upon which the existence of the second supplementary capital of £400 depends is merely that there should first have been accumulated the sum of £2000, of which the £400 is only the capitalised surplus value. The ownership of unpaid labour in the past is thenceforward the only requisite for the appropriation of living unpaid labour upon a steadily increasing scale. The more the capitalist has accumulated, the more will he be able to accumulate.

In so far as the surplus value of which the additional capital of No. 1 consists is the result of the purchase of labour power with part of the original capital (a purchase that conforms to the laws of the exchange of commodities, and, from a legal standpoint, presupposes nothing beyond this, on the part of the worker, that he should have the

<sup>1</sup> "Labour creates capital before capital employs labour." E. G. Wakefield, *England and America*, London, 1833, vol. II, p. 110.



free disposal of his own capacities, and on the part of the owner of money or commodities, that he should have the free disposal of the values in his possession); in so far as the additional capital No. 2, etc., is the mere result of No. 1, and therefore a consequence of the foregoing conditions; in so far as each single transaction continues to correspond to the laws of the exchange of commodities, the capitalist always buying labour power, and the worker always selling it (and we will assume here that the labour power is sold at its real value)—in so far as all these things are true, it is evident that the law of appropriation or the law of private property (a law based on the production and circulation of commodities) is transformed, by its own inner and inexorable dialectic into its direct opposite. The exchange of equivalents, the operation with which we originally started, has been turned about in such a way that now there is only an apparent exchange. For, in the first place, the capital which is exchanged for labour power is itself no more than a portion of the product of others' labour appropriated without an equivalent; and, in the second place, this capital must not only be replaced by its producer, the worker, but must be incremented by an additional surplus. The relation of exchange between capitalist and worker thus becomes a mere semblance appertaining to the process of circulation, a mere form foreign to the essence of the transaction and serving only as a mystification thereof. The perpetual buying and selling of labour power is the outward form. The essential content is that the capitalist again and again appropriates, without equivalent, a portion of the previously materialised labour of others, and exchanges it for a greater quantity of living labour. At the outset, the right of ownership seemed to be based upon the owner's personal labour. At any rate, some such assumption was necessary, seeing that only commodity owners with equal rights confronted each other; and the sole means by which a man could become possessed of the commodities of others was by alienating his own commodities—which latter could only be reproduced by labour. Nowadays, however, property appears to mean, as far as the capitalist is concerned, the right to appropriate others' unpaid labour, or the product thereof; and, as far as the worker is concerned, the impossibility of appropriating the product of his own labour. The divorce of property from labour has become the

necessary consequence of a law which ostensibly originated in their identity.<sup>1</sup>

However much the capitalist method of appropriation may seem to fly in the face of the fundamental laws of commodity production, nevertheless, in actual fact, the method arises out of an application of these laws, and not out of their infringement. A brief review of the succession of phases whose climax is capitalist accumulation may serve once more to make this clear.

We saw, to begin with, that the primary transformation of a certain quantity of value into capital is effected in a way perfectly accordant with the laws of exchange. One contracting party sells his labour power, the other buys it. The former receives the value of his commodity, whose use-value (labour) passes into the possession of the other. The buyer of the labour power then converts means of production belonging to him into a new product, effecting this through the instrumentality of labour which likewise belongs to him, and the product is also his by strict legal right.

The value of this product includes, first of all, the value of the means of production that have been consumed in the process of production. Useful labour cannot use up these means of production without transferring their value to the new product. But, in order to be saleable, labour power must be able to supply useful labour in the particular branch of industry in which it is to be employed.

Furthermore, the value of the new product includes the equivalent of the value of the labour power, and surplus value as well. It does so for the reason that the labour power sold for a certain length of time, such as a day, a week, etc., has less value than is produced by its employment during that time. The worker has received the exchange-value of his labour power, and has given up its use-value in return, this being what happens in every transaction of purchase and sale.

The general law of commodity production is not affected by the fact that this particular commodity known as labour

<sup>1</sup> The property of the capitalist in the product of the labour of others "is a strict consequence of the law of appropriation whose basic principle was, on the contrary, the exclusive title of every worker to the product of his own labour". Cherbuliez, *Richesse ou pauvreté*, Paris, 1841, p. 58.—Here, however, the dialectical reversal is not properly elaborated.

power has a use-value peculiar to itself, the capacity for performing work, that is to say for creating value. If, therefore, the sum of values advanced in wages is not merely reproduced in the product, but is also increased by the addition of surplus value, this is not due to an advantage gained over the seller, who certainly received the value of his commodity, but is simply due to the consumption of this commodity by the purchaser.

The law of exchange stipulates for equality only as regards the exchange-values of the commodities that pass from hand to hand. It presupposes, indeed, that there should be a difference in their use-values, and has nothing whatever to do with their consumption, which only begins after the bargain has been struck and the exchange completed. The primary transformation of money into capital takes place, therefore, in perfect harmony with the economic laws of commodity production, and with the right of property deduced from these laws. Nevertheless, it has as its outcome:

1. That the product belongs to the capitalist, and not to the worker.

2. That the value of this product includes, in addition to the value of the capital advanced, a surplus value, which has cost the worker his work, but has cost the capitalist nothing at all, and is none the less the legitimate property of the capitalist.

3. That the worker's labour power continues intact, and is still at his disposal to sell, if he can find a purchaser.

Simple reproduction is only the periodical repetition of this first operation. Again and again, money is transformed into capital. The general law is not violated thereby, but, on the contrary, only gains the opportunity of manifesting itself in perpetuity. "Several successive exchanges have merely made of the last a representative of the first."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, we have seen that simple reproduction is competent to impress upon this first operation, so far as it was considered to be an isolated transaction, a totally different character. "Among those who share the national revenue, some" [the workers] "acquire each year a new title to it by new labour; others" [the capitalists] "have previously acquired a permanent title to it, through primary labour."<sup>2</sup> We know, of course, that labour is not the only domain in which primogeniture works wonders!

<sup>1</sup> Sismondi, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Sismondi, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

It makes no difference when simple reproduction is replaced by reproduction on a more extended scale, is replaced by accumulation. In the former case, the capitalist consumes the whole of the surplus value; in the latter case, he manifests his civic virtue by consuming only part of it, and by transforming the rest into money.

The surplus value is his property; it has never belonged to any one else. If he applies it to production, then, just as on the first day when he entered the market, he is making advances out of his own funds. It is irrelevant that on this occasion the fund is derived from the unpaid labour of his workers. If worker B is employed by means of the surplus value which worker A has produced, we must remember, in the first place, that A has handed over this surplus value without being cut a farthing short in the just price of his commodity, and, in the second place, that B has no concern in the matter. What B demands, and is entitled to demand, is that the capitalist shall pay him the value of his labour power. "Both sides are gainers: the worker because the fruits of his labour are advanced to him" [read, the unpaid labour of other workers is advanced to him] "before he has performed any labour" [read, before his own labour has borne fruit]; "the master, because the labour of this worker is worth more than his wages" [read, produces a value greater than that of his wages].<sup>1</sup>

True, the matter assumes a very different aspect when we contemplate capitalist production in the uninterrupted flux of its reproduction; and when, instead of fixing our eyes upon the individual capitalist and the individual worker, we regard the totalities, the capitalist class as confronted by the working class. But when we do this, we are applying a standard of measurement which is utterly alien to commodity production.

In commodity production there are nothing but buyer and seller, independent of one another, and facing one another. Their mutual relations end with the carrying out of the bargain they have struck. Should the transaction be repeated, this is in virtue of a new bargain, which has nothing to do with the earlier one, and in which it is only by chance that the same buyer and the same seller enter into mutual relations.

Hence, if commodity production, or a process belonging

<sup>1</sup> Sismondi, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

thereto, is to be judged by its own economic laws, we must consider each act of exchange by itself, and as having no connexion with the act of exchange which preceded it or with the one which may follow it. Further, inasmuch as all sales and purchases are transactions between individuals, we must not attempt to discover therein relations between social classes as a whole.

No matter how long may be the series of periodical reproductions and antecedent accumulations through which the capital now functioning may have passed, it always retains its primal virginity. As long as the laws of exchange are upheld in every act of exchange individually considered, the method of appropriation may be completely revolutionised without in the least affecting the property right bestowed by the production of commodities. This same right remains in force, no matter whether things be as they were in the early days, when the product belonged to the producer, and when the latter, exchanging equivalent for equivalent, could enrich himself in no other way than by his own labour; or whether things be as they are in the capitalist period, when, to an ever increasing extent, social wealth becomes the property of those who are in a position that enables them, again and again, to appropriate the unpaid labour of others.

This result becomes inevitable as soon as labour power is sold by the worker himself, freely, as a commodity. It is from this point that commodity production becomes generalised, becomes the typical form of production; it is at this point, and thenceforward, that every product is from the first produced for sale, and that all the wealth that is produced enters the process of circulation. Not until wage labour has become its basis, is commodity production able to enforce itself upon the whole of society; and not until then can it develop all its latent potentialities. To say that the intervention of wage labour vitiates commodity production, is as much as to say that commodity production must not develop at all if it wishes to remain unvitiating. To the same extent that commodity production, in accordance with its own immanent laws, develops into capitalist production, do the property laws of commodity production become transformed into the laws of capitalist appropriation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We cannot but admire the artfulness of Proudhon, who proposes to abolish capitalist property by enforcing against it—the eternal property laws of commodity production!

We have seen that, even in the case of simple reproduction, all capital outlay, however the capital may have been primarily acquired, becomes transformed into accumulated capital or capitalised surplus value. But in the flux of production, all the capital originally advanced becomes a vanishing magnitude, when compared with the directly accumulated capital, that is to say with surplus value or a surplus product retransformed into capital, no matter whether it now functions in the hands of the original accumulator or in the hands of another. Political economy, therefore, describes capital in general as "accumulated wealth" [transformed surplus value or revenue] "which is reapplied to the production of surplus value";<sup>1</sup> and describes the capitalist as the "owner of the surplus product".<sup>2</sup> The same way of looking at the matter finds merely a different form in the expression that all extant capital is accumulated or capitalised interest; for interest is nothing more than one fragment of surplus value.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. THE POLITICAL ECONOMISTS' ERRONEOUS CONCEPTION OF REPRODUCTION ON A PROGRESSIVELY INCREASING SCALE.

Before we proceed to a closer study of accumulation, or the reconversion of surplus value into capital, we must rid ourselves of an ambiguity introduced by the classical economists.

The commodities which the capitalist buys for his own consumption, paying for them with a part of surplus value, do not serve him as means of production, or as means for the expansion of capital; and just as little is the labour which he buys for the satisfaction of his natural and social needs, productive labour. Instead of transforming surplus value

<sup>1</sup> "Capital, viz., accumulated wealth employed with a view to profit." Malthus, *op. cit.*—"Capital . . . consists of wealth saved from revenue, and used with a view to profit." R. Jones, *An Introductory Lecture on Political Economy*, London, 1833, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> "The possessors of surplus produce or capital." *The Source and Remedy of the National Difficulties, a Letter to Lord John Russell*, London, 1821.

<sup>3</sup> "Capital with compound interest on every portion of capital saved, is so all-engrossing that all the wealth in the world from which income is derived, has long ago become the interest on capital." "Economist," July 19, 1859.

into capital by the purchase of these commodities and this labour, he consumes it or expends it as revenue. As contrasted with the customary attitude of the old nobility, who were content, as Hegel rightly says, "to consume what existed", and who were especially prone to luxuriate in the services of personal retainers, it was of decisive importance for the bourgeois economists to be indefatigable in preaching the accumulation of capital as the citizens' first duty. No one can accumulate if he consumes all his revenue, instead of devoting a considerable proportion of it to expenditure which recruits additional productive workers, who bring in more than they cost. On the other hand, the bourgeois economists found it necessary to inveigh against the popular prejudice which confounds capitalist production with hoarding,<sup>1</sup> and which consequently fosters the delusion that accumulated wealth is wealth which has been saved from destruction in its extant natural form, and has therefore been withdrawn from consumption, or it may be from circulation. The exclusion of money from circulation would be absolutely incompatible with its self-expansion as capital; and the accumulation of a hoard in the form of commodities would be absolute idiocy.<sup>2</sup> The accumulation of commodities in vast quantities is the result of an arrest of circulation or of overproduction.<sup>3</sup> It is true that the popular imagination is impressed, on the one hand, by the sight of the mass of goods that are stored up by the rich for gradual consumption, and on the other hand, by the formation of reserve stocks. This latter is a phenomenon common to all methods of production, and we shall dwell on it for a moment when we come to analyse the process of circulation.

So far, therefore, classical economy is right when it

<sup>1</sup> "No political economist of the present day can by saving mean mere hoarding: and beyond this contracted and insufficient proceeding, no use of the term in reference to the national wealth can well be imagined, but that which must arise from a different application of what is saved, founded upon a real distinction between the different kinds of labour maintained by it." Malthus, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>2</sup> Balzac, who had made a thorough study of every shade of avarice, depicted the old usurer Gobsec as in his second childhood when he began to accumulate a hoard of commodities.

<sup>3</sup> "Accumulation of stocks, . . . non-exchange, . . . overproduction." Thomas Corbet, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

insists that the consumption of surplus product by productive workers instead of by unproductive is a characteristic feature of the process of accumulation. But this is where its mistake begins. Adam Smith has made it the fashion to represent accumulation as nothing more than the consumption of the surplus product by productive workers, which is tantamount to saying that the capitalisation of surplus value is nothing more than its transformation into labour power. Let us turn, for instance, to Ricardo: "It must be understood that all the productions of a country are consumed; but it makes the greatest difference imaginable whether they are consumed by those who reproduce, or by those who do not reproduce, another value. When we say that revenue is saved, and added to capital, what we mean is, that the portion of revenue, so said to be added to capital, is consumed by productive instead of unproductive labourers. There can be no greater error than in supposing that capital is increased by non-consumption."<sup>1</sup> There can be no greater error than that of Ricardo and all subsequent economists who have repeated, following Adam Smith, that "the part of revenue, of which it is said, it has been added to capital, is consumed by productive labourers". According to this point of view, all surplus value that is converted into capital, becomes variable capital. What really happens is that, as in the case of the value originally advanced, part of it becomes constant capital and part variable capital, part of it becomes means of production and part of it labour power. Labour power is the form in which variable capital exists within the field of the process of production. In this process, the labour power is itself consumed by the capitalist. By its function (namely, labour), labour power consumes means of production. At the same time, the money paid for the purchase of labour power is converted into the necessities of life, which are not consumed by "productive labour", but by "the productive worker". Adam Smith, by a fundamentally wrong-headed analysis, comes to the absurd conclusion that, even though each individual capital is divided into constant and variable constituents, social capital consists only of variable capital, this meaning that it is laid out exclusively in the payment of wages. Let us suppose, for instance, that the owner of a cloth factory converts £2000 into capital.

<sup>1</sup> Ricardo, *op. cit.*, p. 163, note.



He expends part of the money in buying weavers, and the other part in buying woollen yarn, machinery, etc. But (says Smith) the people from whom he buys the yarn and the machinery, pay for labour with part of the purchase money, and so on; until the whole of the £2000 has been spent in paying wages, i.e. until the entire product represented by the £2000 has been consumed by productive workers. It is obvious that the gist of this argument lies in the words "and so on", which send us from pillar to post. The fact is that Adam Smith breaks off his investigation just where the difficulties begin.<sup>1</sup>

So long as we keep in view nothing more than the sum total of the annual production, the yearly process of reproduction is easy to understand. But all the constituents of the annual production have to be brought to the commodity market, and that is where the trouble starts. The movements of the individual capitals and personal revenues criss-cross with one another, are mingled, are lost in a sort of game of general post, in the circulation of social wealth. This dazzles the observer's eyes, and gives him very difficult problems to solve. In the third section of Book Two, I shall undertake the analysis of the actual interconnexions of this process. One of the great services performed by the physiocrats, is that they were the first to attempt a depiction of the annual production in the form which it assumes as the outcome of circulation. (This in Quesnay's *Tableau économique*.)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For all his *Logic*, John Stuart Mill never detects the fallacy in so obviously fallacious an analysis as this on the part of his predecessors; an analysis which, even from the bourgeois outlook, from a purely "expert" outlook, clamours for rectification. With the dogmatism proper to a disciple, he invariably parrots the confusions of his master's thoughts. So here: "The capital itself in the long run becomes entirely wages, and when replaced by the sale of produce becomes wages again."

<sup>2</sup> In his account of the process of reproduction, and therefore in that of accumulation as well, Adam Smith not only failed in many respects to make any advance upon his predecessors, but even lost considerable ground, especially as compared with the physiocrats. Associated with the illusion mentioned in the text is the truly fabulous dogma handed down by him to political economy, according to which the price of commodities is composed of wages, profit [interest], and land-rent, this meaning that it consists exclusively of wages and surplus value. Starting from that basis, Storch naively confesses: "It is impossible to reduce necessary price to its simplest elements." *Op. cit.*, St. Petersburg edition, 1815, vol. I, p. 140, note.

Besides, it is self-evident that political economy, acting in the interests of the capitalist class, would not miss the chance of exploiting Adam Smith's contention that the whole of that part of the net product which is converted into capital is consumed by the working class.

### 3. DIVISION OF SURPLUS VALUE INTO CAPITAL AND REVENUE. THEORY OF ABSTINENCE.

In the last chapter we considered surplus value, or surplus product, solely as a fund for individual consumption on the part of the capitalist; in the present chapter, we have hitherto been considering it solely as a fund for accumulation. But it is not exclusively either the one or the other; it is both at once. Part of the surplus value is consumed by the capitalist as revenue<sup>1</sup>; the other part is employed as capital, or accumulated.

In the case of a given amount of surplus value, one of these parts will be larger in proportion as the other is smaller. Other things being equal, the ratio in which this division is effected determines the magnitude of the accumulation. But the person who effects the division is the owner of the surplus value, the capitalist. It is his voluntary act. He is said to "save" that portion of his tribute which he accumulates; to save it because he does not consume it; to save it because he exercises his function as capitalist, the function whereby he enriches himself.

Only in so far as the capitalist is personified capital, has he a historical value; only as such, has he that historical right to exist which, as Lichnowsky has wittily said, has no date. To this extent only is his own fleeting necessity implied in the fleeting necessity of the capitalist method of production. But so far as he is personified capital, not only

—A fine science of economics, this, which declares it to be impossible to reduce the price of commodities to its simplest elements! Further details concerning the matter will be discussed in the third section of Book Two and in the seventh section of Book Three.

<sup>1</sup> The reader will notice that the word *revenue* is used in a double sense: first, to denote surplus value as the periodically produced fruit of capital; secondly, to denote the part of this fruit which is periodically consumed by the capitalist, or added to the fund that supplies his private consumption. I retain this twofold usage, for the reason that it harmonises with the customary phraseology of British and French economists.

use-value and its enjoyment, but also exchange-value and its increase, spur him to action. Fanatically bent upon the expansion of value, he relentlessly drives human beings to production for production's sake, thus bringing about a development of social productivity and the creation of those material conditions of production which can alone form the real basis of a higher type of society, whose fundamental principle is the full and free development of every individual. Only as the personification of capital is the capitalist respectable. As such, he shares with the miser the passion for wealth as wealth. But that which in the miser assumes the aspect of mania, is in the capitalist the effect of the social mechanism in which he is only a driving-wheel. Furthermore, the development of capitalist production necessitates a continuous increase of the capital invested in an industrial undertaking; and capitalism subjects every individual capitalist to the immanent laws of capitalist production as external coercive laws. Competition forces him continually to extend his capital for the sake of maintaining it, and he can only extend it by means of progressive accumulation.

In so far, therefore, as his actions are a mere function of the capital which, through his instrumentality, is endowed with will and consciousness, his own private consumption must be regarded by him as a robbery perpetrated on accumulation—just as in book-keeping by double entry, the private expenditure of the capitalist is placed on the debit side of the account, over against the capital. Accumulation is a conquest of the world of social wealth. It increases the mass of human material exploited by the capitalist, and thus amplifies his direct and indirect dominion.<sup>1</sup>

\* In his study of the usurer, the old-fashioned but perennially renewed form of the capitalist, Luther shows forcibly that the love of power is an element in the impulse to acquire wealth. "The heathen were able, by the light of reason, to conclude that a usurer is a double-dyed thief and murderer. We Christians, however, hold them in such honour, that we fairly worship them for the sake of their money. . . . Whoever eats up, robs, and steals the nourishment of another, that man commits as great a murder (so far as in him lies) as he who starves a man or utterly undoes him. Such does a usurer, and sits the while safe on his stool, when he ought rather to be hanging on the gallows, and be eaten by as many ravens as he has stolen guilders, if only there were so much flesh on him, that so many ravens could stick their beaks in and share it. Meanwhile, we hang the small thieves. . . . Little thieves are put in the stocks, great thieves go flaunting in gold and silk. . . . Therefore is there, on

But original sin is everywhere at work. With the development of the capitalist method of production, of accumulation, and of wealth, the capitalist ceases to be the mere incarnation of capital. He has a fellow-feeling for his own Adam, and he is educated in a manner which teaches him to smile at enthusiasm for an ascetic life, and to regard this as a mere prejudice of the old-fashioned miser. Whilst the archetypal capitalist stigmatises individual consumption as a sin against his function, and as "abstinence" from accumulation, the modernised capitalist is able to regard accumulation as "renunciation" of his impulse towards enjoyment. Alas, two souls dwell within his breast, and one seeks divorce from the other!<sup>1</sup>

In the historical beginnings of the capitalist method of production (and every capitalist upstart passes through this historical phase in his personal experience), the desire to get rich—avarice—is a ruling passion. But the progress of capitalist production does something more than create a world of enjoyments. By inaugurating speculation and the credit system, it taps a thousand sources of speedy enrich-

this earth, no greater enemy of man (after the devil) than a gripe-money, and usurer, for he wants to be God over all men. Turks, soldiers, and tyrants are also bad men, yet must they let the people live, and confess that they are bad, and enemies, and do, nay, must, now and then show pity to some. But a usurer and money-glutton, such a one would have the whole world perish of hunger and thirst, misery and want, so far as in him lies, so that he may have all to himself, and every one may receive from him as from a God, and be his serf for ever. To wear fine cloaks, golden chains, rings, to wipe his mouth, to be deemed and taken for a worthy, pious man. . . . Usury is a great huge monster, like a were-wolf, who lays waste all, more than any Cacus, Geryon, or Antaeus. And yet decks himself out, and would be thought pious, so that people may not see where the oxen have gone, that he drags backwards into his den. But Hercules shall hear the cry of the oxen and of his prisoners, and shall seek Cacus even in cliffs and among rocks, and shall set the oxen loose again from the villain. For Cacus means the villain that is a pious usurer, and steals, robs, eats everything. And will not own that he has done it, and thinks no one will find him out, because the oxen, drawn backwards into his den, make it seem, from their footprints, that they have been let out. So the usurer would deceive the world, as though he were of use and gave the world oxen, while he, however, rends, and eats all alone. . . . And since we break on the wheel, and behead, highwaymen, murderers, and housebreakers, how much more ought we to break on the wheel and kill . . . hunt down, curse, and behead all usurers." Martin Luther, *op. cit.*

<sup>1</sup> See Goethe's *Faust*.

ment. A certain phase of social evolution is reached, a conventional degree of extravagance becomes established, serving at one and the same time as a display of wealth and as a consequent means for securing credit. Such a degree of extravagance may become, even, a business necessity for the "unfortunate" capitalist. For capital, luxury is now part of the cost of keeping up appearances. Moreover, the capitalist does not become enriched as does the miser in proportion to his personal labour and his personal abstinence from consumption, but in proportion to the extent to which he can put the screw on others' labour power, and to which he can enforce upon the worker the renunciation of all the pleasure of life. Although, therefore, the capitalist's extravagance never has the genuine character of unbridled prodigality which was typical of certain feudal magnates, and although behind it there lurk sordid avarice and anxious calculation, none the less his prodigality grows proportionally with his accumulation without the one necessarily putting an end to the other. Therewith, in the capitalist's breast there develops a Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation and the desire for enjoyment.

In a work published in the year 1795, Dr. Aikin writes: "The trade of Manchester may be divided into four periods, first, when manufacturers were obliged to work hard for their livelihood." They enriched themselves mainly by robbing parents whose children were bound as apprentices, the parents paying high premiums, while the apprentices were kept on short commons. On the other hand, the average profits were low, and accumulation could only be effected by extreme parsimony. They lived like misers, and were far from consuming even the interest on their capital. "The second period, when they had begun to acquire little fortunes, but worked as hard as before" (for, as every slave-driver knows, the direct exploitation of labour costs labour), "and lived in as plain a manner as before; . . . the third, when luxury began, and the trade was pushed by sending out riders for orders into every market town in the kingdom; . . . it is probable that few or no capitals of £3000 to £4000 acquired by trade existed here before 1690. However, about that time, or a little later, the traders had got money beforehand, and began to build modern brick houses, instead of those of wood and plaster." Even

actually engaged in production the business of accumulation, while to the other sharers in surplus value (the landed aristocracy, the placemen of the State, the beneficed clergy, etc.), was to be assigned the business of spending. It is of the greatest importance, he says, "to keep separate the passion for expenditure and the passion for accumulation".<sup>1</sup> The capitalists, who had long ere this become men of the world and acquired a taste for good living, uttered loud protests. Are we to understand, asked one of their spokesmen, a disciple of Ricardo, that Mr. Malthus preaches high rents, heavy taxes, etc., in order to provide a spur in the shape of unproductive consumers, that the industrialists may be kept busy? Production, production by all means, upon a steadily increasing scale. That shibboleth is sound enough, say Malthus' critics. Nevertheless, "production will, by such a process, be far more curbed in than spurred on. Nor is it quite fair thus to maintain in idleness a number of persons, only to pinch others, who are likely, from their characters, if you can force them to work, to work with success."<sup>2</sup> Unfair though it seems to this anonymous writer that the industrial capitalist should be spurred on to accumulation by skimming the cream from his milk, none the less, says he, we are to force the worker's wages down to the lowest possible level, "to keep him industrious". Nor does our enquirer conceal the fact for a moment that the appropriation of unpaid labour is the secret of surplus value. "Increased demand on the part of the labourers means nothing more than their willingness to take less of their own product for themselves, and leave a greater part of it to their employer; and if it be said that this begets glut by lessening consumption" (on the part of the labourers), "I can only reply that glut is synonymous with large profits."<sup>3</sup>

The learned squabble concerning the way in which the spoils extracted from the worker can be most advantageously divided (so as to promote accumulation) between the industrial capitalist and the rich idler, was hushed in face of the July revolution. Shortly afterwards, the urban proletariat of Lyons sounded the tocsin of revolt, and the

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-320.

<sup>2</sup> *An Inquiry into those Principles respecting the Nature of Demand*, etc., p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

rural proletariat of England began to fire ricks and barns. On the British side of the Channel, Owenism began to spread; while, on the French side, Saint-Simonism and Fourierism flourished. The day of vulgar economy had dawned. Just a year before Nassau W. Senior discovered in Manchester that the profit (including interest) of capital is the product of the unpaid twelfth hour of labour, he had announced to the world another discovery. "I substitute", he proudly said, "for the word capital, considered as an instrument of production, the word abstinence."<sup>1</sup> This is a peerless example of the "discoveries" of vulgar economics? A sycophantic phrase is substituted for an economic category. That is all. Senior writes: "When the savage makes bows, he exercises an industry, but he does not practise abstinence." That explains how and why, in the earlier stages of society, the instruments of labour could be made without the practice of capitalist abstinence. "The more society progresses, the more abstinence is demanded"<sup>2</sup>—abstinence demanded from those whose business in life it is to appropriate the fruits of others' industry. Henceforward, all the conditions of the labour process become transformed into so many acts of abstinence on the part of the capitalist. If the corn is not all eaten, if some of it is reserved for seed, this is because the capitalist is abstinent! If wine is given time to mature, this is because the capitalist abstains from

<sup>1</sup> Senior, *Principes fondamentaux de l'économie politique*, French translation, Paris, 1836, p. 308.—This was rather too much for the adherents of the classical school of economics. For the expression labour and profit, they said, "Mr. Senior has substituted . . . the expression labour and abstinence. He who converts his revenue, abstains from the enjoyment which its expenditure would afford him. It is not the capital, but the use of the capital productively, which is the cause of profits." John Cazenove, *op. cit.*, p. 130, note.—John Stuart Mill, on the other hand, while accepting Ricardo's theory of profit, annexes Senior's idea of "remuneration of abstinence". Although the Hegelian doctrine of opposites, which is the main source of all dialectic, is uncongenial to him, he feels perfectly at home in the domain of flat contradiction.—It has never occurred to the vulgar economists to make the simple reflection that every kind of human activity can, if we like, be regarded as "abstinence" from the opposite kind of activity. Eating is abstinence from fasting, walking is abstinence from standing, work is abstinence from idleness, idleness is abstinence from work, and so on. These gentlemen would do well to ponder, once in a way, Spinoza's dictum, "determination is negation".

<sup>2</sup> Senior, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

drinking it in the crude state!<sup>1</sup> The capitalist is robbing his own Adam, whenever he "lends [!] the instruments of production to the labourer"; that is, whenever, by incorporating labour power with them, he uses them to promote the self-expansion of capital—instead of eating the whole lot, steam-engines, cotton, railways, manure, horses, etc.; or, as the vulgar economist childishly puts it, instead of dissipating "their value" in luxuries and other articles of consumption.<sup>2</sup> How the capitalists as a class are to perform this feat is a mystery whose solution the vulgar economists have hitherto stubbornly kept to themselves. Enough that the world only continues to exist thanks to the mortifications which the capitalist, the modern counterpart of the Hindu penitent, continues to inflict upon himself. Not only accumulation, but the simple "conservation" of a capital "requires a constant effort to resist the temptation of consuming it".<sup>3</sup> The dictates of simple humanity obviously make it incumbent upon us to release the capitalist from this state of martyrdom and temptation—just as the slaveholder in the Southern States of the American Union has recently, thanks to the abolition of slavery, been freed from the painful dilemma of having to decide whether he should devote all the surplus product flogged out of his negro slaves to the purchase of magnums of champagne, or whether he might not do better for himself by reconverting some of it into more slaves and more land.

In the most widely differing economic forms of society, we find, not only simple reproduction, but also, in varying degrees, reproduction on a progressively increasing scale. Progressively, more is produced and more consumed, this

<sup>1</sup> "No one . . . will sow his wheat, for instance, and allow it to remain a twelvemonth in the ground, or leave his wine in a cellar for years instead of consuming these things or their equivalent at once . . . unless he expects to acquire additional value." Scrope *Political Economy*, edited by A. Potter, New York, 1841, pp. 133-134.

<sup>2</sup> "The privation which the capitalist imposes on himself by lending his instruments of production to the worker, instead of using their value on his own account, and transforming it into useful articles or luxuries." G. de Molinari, *op. cit.*, p. 49.—The word "lending", in the foregoing, is a euphemism which is employed, according to the approved method of the vulgar economists, in order to identify the wage worker who is exploited by the industrial capitalist with the industrial capitalist who exploits him—effecting this with the aid of money supplied on tick by other capitalists.

<sup>3</sup> Courcelles-Seneuil, *op. cit.*, p. 57.



meaning that more product is transformed into means of production. The process, however, does not assume the form of the accumulation of capital, and therefore does not present itself as a function of the capitalist, so long as the worker is not yet confronted by the means of production (and therefore by his own product and his means of subsistence) in the form of capital.<sup>1</sup> Richard Jones, who died a few years ago, after he had been Malthus' successor in the chair of political economy at Haileybury College, discussed this point ably in the light of two important facts. Inasmuch as the great mass of the Hindu population consists of peasants who cultivate their own land, it follows that their produce, their instruments of labour, and their means of subsistence, never take "the shape of a fund saved from revenue", and this fund has, therefore, "gone through a previous process of accumulation".<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, in those Indian provinces where the old system has been least affected by British rule, the workers on the land are in the direct employ of the magnates, to whom a part of the rural surplus product accrues as tribute or land-rent. A portion of this product is consumed in kind by the magnates; another portion is, for them, transformed by the workers into luxuries and other articles of consumption; while the remainder constitutes the wages of the workers who own the instruments of labour they use. Here production and reproduction upon an extended scale run their course without any intervention on the part of that remarkable saint, that knight of the rueful countenance, "the capitalist abstainer".

<sup>1</sup> "The particular classes of income which yield the most abundantly to the progress of national capital, change at different stages of their progress, and are, therefore, entirely different in nations occupying different positions in that progress. . . . Profits . . . unimportant source of accumulation, compared with wages and rents, in the earlier stages of society. . . . When a considerable advance in the powers of national industry has actually taken place, profits rise into comparative importance as a source of accumulation." Richard Jones, *Textbook of Lectures on the Political Economy of Nations*, Hertford, 1852, pp. 16-21.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 36 et seq.—[In a note added by Friedrich Engels to the fourth German edition, we are informed that there is a mistake in the foregoing reference. The passage has not been located.]—See below p. 879.

4. CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH DETERMINE THE SCOPE OF ACCUMULATION, INDEPENDENTLY OF THE PROPORTIONS IN WHICH SURPLUS VALUE IS DIVIDED INTO CAPITAL AND REVENUE: DEGREE OF EXPLOITATION OF LABOUR POWER. PRODUCTIVITY OF LABOUR. INCREASING DIFFERENCE IN AMOUNT BETWEEN CAPITAL INVESTED AND CAPITAL CONSUMED. AMOUNT OF CAPITAL ADVANCED.

The proportions in which surplus value is divided into capital and revenue being given, the amount of capital accumulated must obviously depend upon the absolute magnitude of the surplus value.

If we assume that 80 % is capitalised and 20 % consumed, then, if the total surplus value be £3000, the amount of accumulated capital will be £2400, whereas if the total surplus value be £1500, the amount of capital accumulated will be £1200, and so on. Hence, all the circumstances which determine the total amount of the surplus value play their part in determining the amount of accumulation. I will sum them up once more, but only in so far as they throw a fresh light upon accumulation.

The reader will remember that the rate of surplus value primarily depends upon the degree or rate of exploitation of labour power. Political economy esteems this role so highly, that it sometimes identifies the quickening of accumulation by the increased productivity of labour, with the quickening of accumulation by the increased exploitation of the worker.<sup>1</sup> In the chapters on the production of surplus value it was constantly presupposed that the wages of labour are at least equal to the value of labour power. The forcible reduction of wages below this value plays,

\* "Ricardo says: 'In different stages of society, the accumulation of capital or of the means of employing [read, exploiting] labour is more or less rapid, and must in all cases depend on the productive powers of labour. The productive powers of labour are generally greatest where there is an abundance of fertile land.' If, in the first sentence, 'the productive powers of labour' mean the smallness of the aliquot part of any produce that goes to those whose manual labour produced it, the sentence is nearly identical, because the remaining aliquot part is the fund whence capital can, if the owner pleases, be accumulated. But then this does not generally happen where there is most fertile land." *Observations on certain Verbal Disputes, etc.*, pp. 74-75.

however, in practice, too important a part for us to pass over the matter without consideration. In fact, such a forcing down of wages serves, within certain limits, to transform part of the worker's fund for necessary consumption into a fund for the accumulation of capital.

"Wages", says John Stuart Mill, "have no productive power; they are the price of productive power. Wages do not contribute, along with labour, to the production of commodities, no more than the price of tools contributes along with the tools themselves. If labour could be had without purchase, wages might be dispensed with."<sup>1</sup> But if the workers could live on air, they could not be bought at any price. It follows that the purchase of the workers for nothing at all is a limit, in the mathematical sense of the term, never attainable, though we can always get closer and closer to it. The persistent tendency of capital is to approach nearer to this zero limit. An eighteenth-century writer whom I have often quoted before, the author of the *Essay on Trade and Commerce*, merely discloses the innermost secret soul of the English capitalist when he declares it to be England's historical mission to force down wages in England to the level of wages in France and Holland.<sup>2</sup> He writes naively: "But if our poor" [a technical term for the workers] "will live luxuriously, . . . then labour must, of course, be dear. . . . When it is considered what luxuries the manufacturing populace consume, such as brandy, gin, tea, sugar, foreign fruit, strong beer, printed linens, snuff, tobacco, . . ."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to quote a Northamptonshire factory owner who, casting his eyes heavenward, moans: "Labour is one-third cheaper in France than in

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy*, London, 1844, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *An Essay on Trade and Commerce*, London, 1770, p. 44.—Similarly, in December 1866 and January 1867, the "Times" published certain outpourings from the hearts of the British mineowners in which the writers described the happy condition of the Belgian miners who asked and received nothing more than was absolutely necessary to keep them alive that they might work for their "masters". The Belgian workers have to suffer many things, but it is really too hard that they should be expected to figure in the columns of the "Times" as model workers! In the beginning of February 1867 came the answer, for there was a strike among the Belgian miners at Marchienne. It was suppressed with the aid of powder and shot.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 44 and 46.

England; for their poor work hard and fare hard as to their food and clothing. Their chief diet is bread, fruit, herbs, roots, and dried fish; for they very seldom eat flesh; and when wheat is dear they eat very little bread."<sup>1</sup> Our scribe goes on as follows: "To which may be added, that their drink is either water or other small liquors, so that they spend very little money. . . . These things are very difficult to be brought about; but they are not impracticable, since they have been effected both in France and in Holland."<sup>2</sup> Twenty years later, an American humbug, Benjamin Thompson by name (ennobled as Count Rumford) followed the same philanthropic line to the great satisfaction of God and man. His *Essays* are a cookery book containing recipes of all kinds for cheap foods which can replace the more expensive articles of the workers' customary diet. A particularly choice specimen of this remarkable "philosopher's" recipes is the following: "5 lbs. of barley meal, 7½d.; 5 lbs. of Indian corn, 6½d.; 3d. worth of red herring; 1d. salt; 1d. vinegar; 2d. pepper and sweet herbs; in all, 20½d.; make a soup for 64 men, and at the medium price of barley and of Indian corn, . . . this soup may be provided at ½d. the portion of 20 ounces."<sup>3</sup> With the

<sup>1</sup> Our Northamptonshire factory owner commits a pious fraud here which must be excused in one whose heart is so full. His avowed object is to compare the living conditions of the British and the French factory workers, but in the passage I have quoted he describes (as he himself subsequently admits in his confused way) the French agricultural labourers!

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.—To-day [1883, in a note to the third edition of *Das Kapital*], thanks to the competition in the world market established since the days to which the quotation in the text refers, we have made a considerable advance. Mr. Stapleton, M.P., in a speech to his constituents, says: "If China should become a great manufacturing country, I do not see how the manufacturing population of Europe could sustain the contest without descending to the level of their competitors." "Times", September 9, 1873, p. 8.—The goal towards which British capitalism strives is no longer continental wages, but Chinese wages.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Thompson, *Essays, Political, Economical, and Philosophical, etc.*, 3 vols., London, 1796 to 1802, vol. I, p. 288.—In his book, *The State of the Poor, or an History of the Labouring Classes in England, etc.*, Sir F. M. Eden strongly recommends Count Rumford's beggars' soup to the masters of workhouses, and reproachfully warns the English workers that "many poor people, particularly in Scotland, live, and that very comfortably, for months together, upon oatmeal and barley meal, mixed with only water and salt". *Op. cit.*, vol. I, book I, chap. II, p. 503.—We find like pointers in nineteenth-

advance of capitalist production, the adulteration of food has rendered Thompson's ideals superfluous.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century and during the first decade of the nineteenth, the English farmers and landlords enforced the absolute minimum of wages by paying the agricultural labourers less than the minimum as actual wages and making up the balance in the form of parish relief. Here is an example of the merry little way in which the English Dogberries acted in their "legal" fixing of a wages tariff: "The squires of Norfolk had dined, says Mr. Burke, when they fixed the rate of wages. The squires of Berks evidently thought that the labourers ought not to do so when they fixed the rate of wages at Speenhamland, in 1795. . . . There they decided that 'income [weekly] should be 3s. for a man,' when the gallon or half-peck loaf of 8 lbs. 11 ozs. is at 1s., and increased regularly till bread is 1s. 5d. ; when it is above that sum, decrease regularly till it be at 2s. and then his food should be one-fifth less."<sup>2</sup> Before the House of Lords Committee of Inquiry in 1814, a certain A. Bennett, a large-scale farmer, magistrate, Poor Law guardian, and wage regulator, was asked: "Has any proportion of the value of daily labour been made up to the labourers out of the poor rate?" Answer: "Yes, it has; the weekly income of every family is made up to the gallon loaf (8 lbs. 11 ozs.) and 3d. per head! . . . The gallon loaf per week is what we suppose sufficient for the maintenance of every person in the family for the week; and the 3d. is for clothes, and if the parish

century works. For instance: "The most wholesome mixtures of flour having been refused" [by the English agricultural labourer]" . . . in Scotland where education is better, this prejudice is, probably, unknown." Charles H. Parry, M.D., *The Question of the Necessity of the existing Corn Laws considered*, London, 1816, p. 69. This same Parry, however, complains that in 1815 the condition of the English labourer was much worse than it had been when Eden wrote in 1797.

<sup>1</sup> From the reports of the latest parliamentary commission on the adulteration of the means of subsistence, it is evident that in England the adulteration even of medicaments is not the exception but the rule. For instance, the examination of 34 specimens of opium, bought of 34 different London chemists, showed that 31 of them were adulterated with poppy heads, flour, gum, clay, sand, etc. Several of them did not contain a trace of morphine, the essential alkaloid of opium.

<sup>2</sup> G. B. Newnham, barrister-at-law, *A Review of the Evidence before the Committee of the two Houses of Parliament on the Corn Laws*, London, 1815, p. 28, note.

think proper to find clothes, the 3d. is deducted. This practice goes through all the western part of Wiltshire, and I believe throughout the country."<sup>1</sup> A bourgeois writer of that period indignantly exclaims regarding the farmers: "For years they have degraded a respectable class of their countrymen, by forcing them to have recourse to the workhouse. . . . The farmer, while increasing his own gains, has prevented any accumulation on the part of his labouring dependents."<sup>2</sup> The history of domestic industry, recorded in the eighth section of Chapter Fifteen, has already disclosed the part played nowadays in the formation of surplus value (and therefore in the formation of the accumulation fund of capital), by the direct theft of part of the worker's necessary consumption fund. Further facts bearing on this topic will be given later.

Although in every branch of industry that part of the constant capital which consists of the instruments of labour must necessarily be sufficient for a certain number of workers (the number being determined by the scale of the undertaking), it does not follow that this part necessarily increases proportionally with an increase in the quantity of labour employed. Let us suppose that, in a particular factory, 100 workers, working for 8 hours a day, yield 800 working hours. If the capitalist wishes to increase this amount by one half, he can engage 50 additional workers. But in that case he will have to lay out additional capital, not only for wages, but also for the instruments of labour. Instead of this, however, he can make the original 100 workers work for 12 hours instead of 8, and, if he does so, the extant instruments of labour will suffice, the only additional expense in this respect being that they will wear out more quickly. Thus additional labour derived from a greater intensity of labour power can increase surplus product, and surplus value which is the substance of accumulation, without a proportional increase in the constant constituent of the capital invested.

In the extractive industries (mines, etc.), raw materials

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Parry, *op. cit.*, pp. 77 and 69.—The landlords, for their part, not only "indemnified" themselves for the anti-Jacobin war, which they waged in the name of England, but enriched themselves enormously. Their rents doubled, trebled, quadrupled, "and, in one instance, increased sixfold, in eighteen years". *Op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

form no part of the capital outlay. The object of labour is not in this case the product of antecedent labour, but is a gift from nature. This applies to metallic ores, minerals, coal, stone, etc. Here the constant capital consists almost exclusively of the instruments of labour, which can very well be handled by an increased amount of labour (as, for instance, by working 24 hours in the day, with day shifts and night shifts). If the other conditions remain unchanged, the amount and the value of the product will increase in direct proportion to an increase in the amount of labour that is applied. As on the first day of production, the original formers of the product (those who therefore create also the material elements of capital), man and nature, still work together. Thanks to the elasticity of labour power, the domain of accumulation has extended without any antecedent increase in the constant capital.

In agriculture, the land under cultivation cannot be increased without the supply of a supplementary amount of seed and manure. But, when this supplementary supply has been provided, the purely mechanical elaboration of the soil produces a remarkable effect upon the quantity of the product. A greater amount of labour supplied by the same number of workers as before, will therefore increase fertility, without demanding any additional expenditure upon the instruments of labour. Once more we find that the action of man on nature can directly effect an increase in accumulation, without the intervention of any new capital.

Turning from agriculture to industry proper, we find that every additional expenditure of labour presupposes a corresponding additional expenditure upon raw materials, but not necessarily an additional expenditure upon the instruments of labour. Since the extractive industries and agriculture supply factory industries with raw materials, and also supply them with the instruments of labour, the additional product the former have created without additional outlay of capital, tells also in favour of the latter.

Let us now consider the general result of the foregoing considerations. Inasmuch as capital incorporates into itself the two primary creators of wealth, namely labour power and land, it acquires an expansive energy which enables it to extend the elements of its accumulation beyond the bounds ostensibly imposed on it by its own

magnitude, or by the value and the quantity of the already produced means of production in which it has its being.

Another important factor in the accumulation of capital is the degree of productivity of social labour.

The mass of the products in which a definite value (including surplus value of a given magnitude) is embodied, grows with the productivity of labour. When the rate of surplus value remains constant, or even when it falls so long as it falls less rapidly than the productivity of labour rises, the mass of the surplus product grows. The proportional division of the surplus product into revenue and supplementary capital remaining as before, the consumption of the capitalists can therefore increase without any falling-off in the accumulation fund. The relative magnitude of the accumulation fund may even increase at the expense of the consumption fund, whilst the cheapening of commodities puts at the capitalist's disposal as many means of enjoyment as before, or even a larger number of these. But, as we have seen, a cheapening of the worker occurs simultaneously with a growth in the productivity of labour (this meaning a growth in the rate of surplus value), even though real wages are rising. They never rise proportionally to the increase in the productivity of labour. The same value in variable capital therefore sets in movement more labour power, and consequently more labour. The same value in constant capital is embodied in more means of production, i.e. in more instruments of labour, materials of labour, and auxiliary substances; it therefore supplies more elements for the production both of use-value and of value, and, consequently, more absorbers of labour. The value of the additional capital, therefore, remaining the same or even diminishing, accelerating accumulation still takes place. Not only does the scale of reproduction extend, materially considered; but the production of surplus value increases more rapidly than the value of the supplementary capital.

The development of the productive power of labour also reacts upon the original capital, upon the capital already engaged in the process of production. Part of the constant capital that is at work consists of the instruments of labour, such as machinery, etc., which are only consumed (and therefore reproduced, or replaced by new ones of the same kind) in the course of lengthy periods of time. Nevertheless,



year by year, a part of these instruments of labour perishes, or reaches the limit of its productive function. Year by year, therefore, part of the machinery is in the phase of its periodical reproduction, or its replacement by new machinery of the same kind. If, in the birthplace of these instruments of labour, the productivity of labour has meanwhile increased (and it is continually increasing, thanks to the uninterrupted advance in science and technique), then more efficient machines, tools, apparatus, etc., take the place of the old—and are cheaper, in view of their increased efficiency. The old capital is reproduced in a more productive form, quite apart from the constant detail improvements in the instruments of labour already in use. The other part of the constant capital, that which consists of raw materials and auxiliary substances, is continually reproduced in less than a year; while in agriculture this reproduction for the most part occurs annually. Every introduction of improved methods, etc., acts, in this case likewise, almost simultaneously upon the supplementary capital and upon the capital that is already at work. Every advance in chemistry serves, not merely to multiply the number of useful substances and the applications of those already known (thus, while promoting the growth of capital, enlarging also its field of investment); in addition, it teaches methods that enable the excrements, the waste products, of the process of production and consumption to be usefully thrust back into the circulation of the reproductive process, thus creating new capital material without any previous outlay of capital. Like the increased exploitation of natural wealth by merely increasing the intensity of labour power, science and technology give capital a power of expansion independent of the given magnitude of the capital already at work. They react at the same time on that part of the original capital which has entered into its phase of renewal. This, when passing into its new form, gratuitously incorporates the social progress that has been going on behind the back of its old form. Of course, this development of productivity is accompanied by a partial depreciation of the capital actually at work. In so far as such a depreciation makes itself acutely felt in the form of competition, the main burden falls upon the worker, for the capitalist tries to indemnify himself by more effective exploitation.

Labour transmits to the product the value of the means

of production consumed by it. On the other hand, the value and the mass of the means of production set in motion by a given quantity of labour, increase proportionally with an increase in the productivity of labour. Though the same quantity of labour always adds to its products exactly the same amount of new value, the old capital value transmitted by the labour to the products increases with the growing productivity of labour.

For instance, an English cotton spinner and a Chinese cotton spinner may work for the same number of hours with the same intensity, and will therefore in one week create equal amounts of value. Despite this equality, there is an enormous difference between the value of the weekly product of the Englishman, whose work is done with the aid of a mighty automaton, and that of the Chinese worker who has nothing but a primitive spinning wheel. In the time during which the Chinese worker is spinning 1 lb. of cotton, the English worker is spinning several hundred pounds. An amount of old values many hundreds of times as great swells the value of his product, in which these old values reappear in a new, useful form, and can thus function afresh as capital. As Friedrich Engels has told us: "In 1782, all the wool crop of the previous three years lay untouched [in England] for want of workers, and untouched it must have continued to lie had not newly invented machinery come to its aid and spun it."<sup>1</sup> Of course, labour embodied in the form of machinery did not suffice to conjure up even one living worker out of the ground; yet thanks to its use a smaller number of workers, with the supplement of comparatively little living labour, could not merely consume the wool productively and add fresh value to it, but was able to preserve its old value in the form of yarn, etc. At the same time, it caused and stimulated increased reproduction of wool. Such is the natural property of living labour—to transmit old value while creating new. Hence, with the increase in the efficiency, the scope, and the value of the means of production, that is to say with the accumulation that accompanies the development of its productive power, labour maintains and eternalises in new and ever new forms a perpetually increasing capital value.<sup>2</sup> This natural power

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Engels, *Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Classical political economy, owing to its defective analysis of the labour process and of the process of creating value, has never

of labour assumes the aspect of a power of self-preservation possessed by the capital with which it is incorporated; just as the productive forces of social labour assume the aspect of properties of capital, and just as the continuous appropriation of surplus labour by the capitalists assumes the aspect of a continuous self-expansion of capital. All the forces of labour masquerade as the forces of capital, just as all the value forms of the commodity masquerade as forms of money.

As capital grows, the difference between capital that is used and capital that is consumed increases. In other words, there is an increase in the value and in the material mass of the instruments of labour, such as buildings, machinery, drain-pipes, draught horses and oxen, apparatus of every kind functioning for a longer or shorter time in processes of production constantly repeated, or serving for the attain-

arrived at a satisfactory understanding of this important factor of reproduction. We can see as much in the writings of Ricardo. For instance, he says that, whatever the change in productive power, "a million men always produce in manufactures the same value": This is correct, provided that the extension and the intensity of their labour be constant. Nevertheless (and here is a fact which Ricardo overlooks in drawing some of his conclusions), a million men with varying powers of productivity in their labour, transforming different quantities of the means of production into products, and therefore preserving in these products different amounts of value, will, as net result, produce products whose values may vary considerably. Ricardo, I may mention in passing, has vainly endeavoured, by that very example, to make clear to J. B. Say the difference between use-value (which he here calls wealth or material riches) and exchange-value. Say answers: "As to the difficulty which Mr. Ricardo raises when he says that, by improved processes, a million persons can produce twice or thrice as much wealth without producing more value, this difficulty ceases to exist when we consider, as we should, production as an exchange in which a man gives the productive services of his labour, his land, and his capital, in order to obtain products. It is by means of these productive services that we acquire all the products existing in the world. Now . . . we are the richer, our productive services have more value, in proportion as they secure, in the exchange termed production, a larger quantity of useful things." (J. B. Say, *Lettres à Monsieur Malthus*, Paris, 1820, pp. 168-169.) The "difficulty" (it exists only for Say, not for Ricardo) which Say means to clear up is this: Why, does not the value of the use-value increase when its quantity is increased owing to an increase in the productivity of labour? Answer: The difficulty is solved by politely calling use-value, exchange-value. Exchange-value is something which, one way or another, is connected with exchange. If, therefore, we term production an "exchange" of

ment of particular useful effects, while they themselves only wear out gradually, consequently only lose their value piecemeal, and therefore transfer that value to the product only bit by bit. In the same proportion as these instruments of labour serve as the creators of product without adding value to the product, in the same degree as they are wholly applied but only partially consumed, they perform, as we saw above, the same gratuitous service as do the forces of nature, water, steam, wind, electricity, etc. This gratuitous service of past labour, when seized upon and animated by living labour, increases as we advance from stage to stage of accumulation.

Inasmuch as past labour always dresses itself up as capital, that is to say inasmuch as the "liabilities" of the labour of A, B, C, etc., become the "assets" of the non-worker X, the bourgeois and the political economists are full of praises for the services of past labour, which, according

labour and means of production for the product, it is clear as daylight that you get more exchange-value in proportion as the product yields more use-value. In other words: The more use-values (stockings, let us say) that one working day yields to the owner of a stocking factory. the richer he is in stockings. But now it suddenly occurs to Say, that, "with the larger quantity" of stockings, its "price" (which naturally has nothing whatever to do with exchange-value) falls "because competition compels the producers to hand over the products at cost price". But where does the profit come in, if the capitalist sells the commodities at cost price? Never mind! Say explains that, in consequence of the increase in productivity, every buyer gets, for the same equivalent, two pairs of stockings, instead of only one pair as before. The goal at which he arrives is the very statement of Ricardo which he set out to refute. After this mighty effort of thought, he triumphantly apostrophises Malthus as follows: "Such, Sir, is the closely reasoned doctrine without which it is impossible, I declare, to explain the chief difficulties of political economy, and, above all, how a nation can become richer when its products fall in value, notwithstanding the fact that wealth is value." *Op. cit.*, p. 170.—An English economist, commenting upon similar feats of sleight-of-hand in Say's *Lettres*, writes: "Those affected ways of talking make up in general that which Monsieur Say is pleased to call his doctrine, and which he earnestly urges Malthus to teach at Hertford, as it is already taught 'in many parts of Europe'. He says: 'If you consider that all these propositions have a paradoxical aspect, look at the things which they express, and I venture to think that they will seem to you extremely simple and extremely reasonable.' Doubtless, and in consequence of the same process they will appear everything else except original."—*An Inquiry into those Principles respecting the Nature of Demand*, etc., pp. 116 and 110.

to the Scottish genius, McCulloch, ought to receive a special remuneration in the form of interest, profit, etc.<sup>1</sup> Thus the steadily increasing importance of the cooperation of past labour (under the guise of means of production) in the living labour process, is ascribed to its capital form—though this form is estranged from the worker, whose past and unpaid labour the means of production embody. The practical agents of capitalist production and their pettifogging ideologists, are as incapable of thinking of the means of production as distinct from the antagonistic social mask these wear to-day, as a slave-owner is able to think of the worker he owns apart from that worker's character as a slave.

For a given rate of exploitation of labour power, the mass of surplus value is determined by the number of simultaneously exploited workers; and this corresponds, although to a varying degree, to the magnitude of the capital. The more, therefore, that capital grows thanks to successive increments of accumulation, the more, likewise, grows the sum total of value which splits up into a consumption fund and an accumulation fund. The capitalist, therefore, is able at once and the same time to cut more of a dash and to "abstain" more largely. Finally, all the forces of production operate more energetically, the more the scale of production extends as the mass of capital advanced increases.

## 5. THE SO-CALLED WAGES FUND.

In the course of this investigation, we learned that capital is not a fixed magnitude, but is a part of social wealth which is constantly fluctuating in amount, in accordance with variations in the division of surplus value into revenue and supplementary capital. We saw, further, that, even when the magnitude of the capital at work is taken as fixed, the labour power, the science, and the land (by which last term we mean, for the purposes of political economy, all the conditions of labour furnished by nature independently of man), embodied in it, constitute elastic potentialities of capital giving it, within certain limits, a field of action independent of its own magnitude. In this enquiry, we ignored all the effects of the process of circula-

<sup>1</sup> McCulloch took out a patent for "wages of past labour", long before Senior did the same thing for "wages of abstinence".

tion, effects which may influence the efficiency of any given mass of capital very greatly in one direction or another. Accepting, as we did, the limitations of capitalist production, the topic of our enquiry was a spontaneously originating form of the social process of production. We were not concerned with any other conceivable and more rational combinations of productive forces, such as could be directly and purposively effected by the utilisation of the extant means of production and the quantity of labour power at present available. The classical economists have always been fond of considering social capital as a fixed magnitude possessing a fixed degree of efficiency. But this prejudice does not harden into a dogma until we come to the arch-philistine, Jeremy Bentham, the insipid, pedantic, leather-tongued oracle of the commonplace bourgeois intelligence of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Bentham is among philosophers what Martin Tupper is among poets. Neither of them could have been made anywhere else than in England.<sup>2</sup> In the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for instance, Jeremy Bentham, *Théorie des peines et des récompenses*, French translation by Etienne Dumont, third edition, Paris, 1826, vol. II, book IV, chap. II.

<sup>2</sup> Bentham is a purely English phenomenon. I do not even except the German philosopher, Christian Wolf, when I declare that at no time and in no country has the most trivial commonplace ever before strutted about with such appalling self-satisfaction. The principle of utility was not discovered by Bentham. He merely reproduced in a dull and spiritless fashion what Helvétius and other French writers of the eighteenth century had said before him so brilliantly. To know what is useful for a dog, we must study dog nature. This nature cannot be excogitated from the "principle of utility". Applying the same considerations to man, he that would pass judgment upon all human activities, movements, relations, etc., in accordance with the principle of utility, must first become acquainted with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each specific historical epoch. But Bentham makes short work of it. In his arid and simple way, he assumes the modern petty bourgeois, and above all the modern English petty bourgeois, to be the normal man. Whatever seems useful to this queer sort of normal man and to his world, is regarded as useful in and by itself. By this yardstick, Bentham proceeds to measure everything past, present, and to come. For instance, the Christian religion is "useful" because, in the name of religion, it forbids that which the penal law condemns; art criticism is "harmful" because it disturbs worthy folk in their enjoyment of Martin Tupper; and so on. The good Bentham has filled piles upon piles of books with rubbish of this sort, his motto being "no day without writing a few lines at least". Had I the pluck of my friend, Heinrich Heine, I should call Mr. Jeremy a genius in the way of bourgeois stupidity.

light of his dogma, the most ordinary phenomena of the process of production, such as its sudden expansions and contractions, and even accumulation, become absolutely incomprehensible.<sup>1</sup> Not only by Bentham himself, but also by Malthus, James Mill, McCulloch, and others, the dogma was used for apologetic purposes, especially in order to represent one portion of capital, namely variable capital or capital convertible into labour power, as a fixed magnitude. The material existence of variable capital, this meaning the mass of the means of subsistence which it represents for the worker, or the so-called wages fund, was mythically described as if it constituted a special part of social wealth, cut off from the rest by insuperable natural barriers. It is true that, to set in motion the part of social wealth which is to function as constant capital (or, to put the matter in material terms, which is to function as means of production), a definite quantity of living labour is needed. This is determined by technological considerations. But it is not true that the number of workers requisite to set this mass of labour in motion is definitely fixed, for the number varies with the degree of exploitation of the individual labour power; nor is it true that the price of this labour power is fixed, the only thing that is fixed being its minimum price, though even that is extremely elastic. The facts underlying the dogma are the following. On the one hand, the worker has not a word to say regarding the division of social wealth into the means of enjoyment of the non-workers, for one part, and the means of production, for the other. On the other hand, it is only in favourable and exceptional instances that he can increase the so-called wages fund at the expense of the revenue of the rich.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Political economists are too apt to consider a certain quantity of capital and a certain number of labourers as productive instruments of uniform power, or operating with a certain uniform intensity. . . . Those . . . who maintain . . . that commodities are the sole agents of production . . . prove that production could never be enlarged, for it requires as an indispensable condition to such an enlargement that food, raw materials, and tools should be previously augmented; which is in fact maintaining that no increase of production can take place without a previous increase, or, in other words, that an increase is impossible." S. Bailey, *Money and its Vicissitudes*, pp. 26 and 70.—Bailey is criticising the dogma mainly from the outlook of the process of circulation.

<sup>2</sup> John Stuart Mill, in his *Principles of Political Economy*, writes: "The really exhausting and the really repulsive labours, instead of

Let me quote Professor Fawcett in illustration of the way in which the attempt to depict the capitalist limitations of the wages fund as natural social limitations, leads to absurd tautology: "The circulating capital of a country is its wage fund. Hence, if we desire to calculate the average money wages received by each labourer, we have simply to divide the amount of this capital by the number of the labouring population."<sup>1</sup> This means that we first add together into one total all the sums actually paid as wages to individual workers, and then we declare that the sum thus obtained forms the total value of the "wages fund" vouchsafed to us by God and by nature. Last of all we divide this sum by the total number of the workers, in order to deduce, once more, how much, on the average, each individual worker can receive. An extremely artful dodge, this! Yet Mr. Fawcett finds it possible to say in the same breath: "The aggregate wealth which is annually saved in England, is divided into two portions; one portion is employed as capital to maintain our industry, and the other portion is exported to foreign countries. . . . Only a portion, and perhaps not a large portion, of the wealth which is annually saved in this country, is invested in our own industry."<sup>2</sup>

The greater part of the annually increasing surplus product which is taken away from the English worker without any equivalent is, according to this, capitalised,

being better paid than others, are almost invariably paid the worst of all. . . . The more revolting the occupation, the more certain it is to receive the minimum of remuneration. . . . The hardships and the earnings, instead of being directly proportional, as in any just arrangements of society they would be, are generally in an inverse ratio to one another."—To avoid misunderstanding, I wish to point out here that, though such men as John Stuart Mill deserve criticism on account of the contradictions between their obsolete economic dogmas and their modern tendencies, it would be utterly unjust to confound them with the ruck of apologists belonging to the school of vulgar economics.

<sup>1</sup> H. Fawcett, professor political economy at Cambridge, *The Economic Position of the British Labourer*, London, 1865, p. 120.—Let me remind the reader that I was the first to use the categories "variable capital" and "constant capital". Political economists in general, from Adam Smith onwards, have confused the essential distinctions involved in these categories with the purely formal differences between fixed and circulating capital, differences which arise out of the process of circulation. This matter will be more fully discussed in Book Two, Part Two.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 122–123.



not in England, but in foreign countries. Nevertheless, with the supplementary capital thus exported, part of the "wages fund" invented by God and Mr. Bentham is likewise exported.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It might be said that not only capital, but also workers, are annually exported from England, the latter in the form of emigrants. But in the text there is no question of the peculium of the emigrants, the majority of whom are not manual workers. Many of them are the sons of farmers. The supplementary capital annually sent abroad from England to be put out at interest stands at a much greater ratio to the annual accumulation than does the annual emigration to the annual increase of population

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[*Translators' Note to section entitled "The so-called Wages Fund."*—We have not been able to be consistent in the translation of the term *Arbeitsfond* (literally, labour fund) Marx uses this word, and not *Lohnfond* (wages fund, or wage fund), because he wants a general term, not applicable solely to capitalist conditions, to denote "the fund for providing the necessities of life, or the labour fund which the worker needs for his own maintenance and reproduction—a fund which he must himself continually produce and reproduce, whatever may be the system of social production" (see above, p. 623). But when he comes to criticise a special doctrine about this "fund," a doctrine peculiar to bourgeois economists (though now discredited even by them) and relating exclusively to capitalist production, it seemed better to use the term "wages fund" by which this theory is usually known.—Unfortunately Marx does not give chapter and verse to explain why he has singled out Bentham as specially responsible for the capitalist theory of the wages fund. In Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy*, 1925, vol. I, p. 132, article *Bentham*, "J. B.", after quoting a passage from Bentham which in our opinion does vaguely imply the wages-fund theory, goes on to say: "The assertion of Karl Marx that Bentham was the author of the theory of a wages fund rests on no stronger evidence than the passage above quoted about machinery. The statement that labour is limited by capital does not by itself imply so much".—Bentham was a voluminous writer, and Marx may have come across an article of his which has escaped general notice.—E. and C. P.]

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### GENERAL LAW OF CAPITALIST ACCUMULATION

#### I. THE INCREASED DEMAND FOR LABOUR POWER THAT ACCOMPANIES ACCUMULATION, THE COMPOSITION OF CAPITAL REMAINING THE SAME.

IN the present chapter we shall discuss the influence which the growth of capital exercises upon the destinies of the working class. The most important elements of this enquiry are the composition of capital and the changes it undergoes in the course of the process of accumulation.

The *composition* of capital is to be understood in a two-fold sense. From the outlook of value, it is determined by the proportions in which it is divided into constant capital, or the value of the means of production, and variable capital, or the value of labour power, the total amount of wages. From the outlook of the substance of capital, as it functions in the process of production, all capital is divided into means of production and living labour power. This latter composition is determined by the ratio between the quantity of the means of production utilised, on the one hand, and the quantity of labour requisite for their utilisation, on the other. I term the former the "value composition", and the latter the "technical composition" of capital. Between the two there is an intimate mutual relation. To express this, I term the value composition of capital, in so far as it is determined by its technical composition and mirrors the changes of the latter, the "organic composition" of capital. When I refer to the composition of capital without qualification, I always mean its organic composition.

The many individual capitals invested in a particular branch of production differ more or less in composition. The mean of their individual compositions gives us the composition of the total capital in this branch of production. Finally, the general average of the average compositions of the capitals invested in all the branches of production in a country gives us the composition of its social capital. In the last analysis, this latter is what I am about to discuss.

The growth of capital includes the growth of its variable

constituent, of the part converted into labour power. Part of the surplus value transformed into supplementary capital must always be reconverted into variable capital or supplementary labour fund. Let us suppose that, the circumstances being otherwise unchanged, the composition of capital remains unaltered, this signifying that a definite quantity of the means of production or constant capital always requires the same quantity of labour power to set it in motion; then, obviously, the demand for labour and the subsistence fund of the workers will increase in proportion to the capital, and will do so more rapidly the more rapidly the capital grows. Since capital produces surplus value every year, part of this being year by year added to the original capital; since this increment itself grows year by year as the amount of capital already functioning grows; and since, finally, under the spur of some special impulse towards enrichment (such as may arise from the opening of new markets, new spheres of investment that are offered by newly developed social wants, etc.), the scale of accumulation can be suddenly extended, merely by a change in the proportional division of the surplus value or surplus product into capital and revenue—the needs of capital for accumulation may outstrip the growth of labour power or of the number of workers, so that the demand for workers will exceed the supply, and therefore wages will rise. Indeed, this must inevitably occur should the conditions above assumed continue in force. Since, each year, more workers are employed than were employed in the previous year, sooner or later the moment must come when the needs of accumulation begin to exceed the ordinary supply of labour, and this is the point at which wages must rise. Complaints concerning a rise of wages made themselves heard in England throughout the fifteenth century, and during the first half of the eighteenth century. But the fundamental character of capitalist production is not in any way altered because the wage-earning class is, for the time being, in circumstances comparatively favourable to its maintenance and multiplication. Just as simple reproduction incessantly reproduces the capital relation itself, capitalists on one side and wage workers on the other; so reproduction on an extended scale, or accumulation, incessantly reproduces the capital relation on an extended scale, more capitalists or greater capitalists at one pole, and more wage workers

at the other. The reproduction of the labour power which must incessantly incorporate itself with capital as a means for the self-expansion of capital, of the labour power which cannot get free from capital, of the labour power whose enslavement to capital is only concealed by the fact that it sells itself now to one capitalist and now to another, this reproduction of labour power forms, in fact, an essential factor in the reproduction of capital itself. Accumulation of capital is, therefore, increase of the proletariat.<sup>1</sup>

Classical economy grasped this fact so thoroughly that Adam Smith, Ricardo, etc., as previously mentioned, actually made the mistake of identifying accumulation with consumption, on the part of the productive workers, of all the capitalised part of the surplus product, or with its transformation into supplementary wage workers. As early as 1696, John Bellers wrote: "For if one had a hundred thousand acres of land and as many pounds of money, and as many cattle, without a labourer, what would the rich man be, but a labourer? And as the labourers make men rich, so, the more labourers, there will be the more rich men; . . . the labour of the poor being the mines of the rich."<sup>2</sup> Bernard de Mandeville wrote in the same strain at the beginning of the eighteenth century: "It would be easier, where property is well secured, to live without money than without poor; for who would do the work? . . . As they"

<sup>1</sup> See Karl Marx, *op. cit.*—Consider also this: "The degree of oppression of the masses remaining unchanged, the more proletarians there are in a country, the richer it is." Colins, *L'économie politique, source des révolutions et des utopies prétendues socialistes*, Paris, 1857, vol. III, p. 331.—Our "proletarian" is, economically considered, nothing other than the wage worker who produces and increases "capital", and is thrown into the street as soon as he becomes superfluous for the needs of expansion of "Monsieur Capital" (to use Pecqueur's impersonation). "The sickly proletarian of the primeval forest" is a pretty phantom created in the mind of Roscher. The primitive forest dweller is the owner of the primeval forest, his ownership thereof being no less unrestricted than is the ownership of the orang-utang. Consequently he is not a proletarian. He would only be a proletarian if the primeval forest exploited him, instead of being exploited by him. As far as his health is concerned, such a man would well bear comparison, not only with the modern proletarian, but also with the syphilitic and scrofulous members of the upper class. No doubt, however, Herr Wilhelm Roscher, when he speaks of the "primeval forest", really means nothing more than his native Lüneburger Heath.

<sup>2</sup> John Bellers, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

[the poor] "ought to be kept from starving, so they should receive nothing worth saving. If here and there one of the lowest class by uncommon industry, and pinching his belly, lifts himself above the condition he was brought up in, nobody ought to hinder him; nay, it is undeniably the wisest course for every person in the society, and for every private family, to be frugal; but it is the interest of all rich nations, that the greatest part of the poor should almost never be idle, and yet continually spend what they get. . . . Those that get their living by their daily labour . . . have nothing to stir them up to be serviceable but their wants which it is prudence to relieve, but folly to cure. The only thing then that can render the labouring man industrious, is a moderate quantity of money, for as too little will, according as his temper is, either dispirit or make him desperate, so too much will make him insolent and lazy. . . . From what has been said, it is manifest, that, in a free nation, where slaves are not allowed of, the surest wealth consists in a multitude of laborious poor; for besides, that they are the never-failing nursery of fleets and armies, without them there could be no enjoyment, and no product of any country could be valuable. To make the society" [which, of course, consists of non-workers] "happy and people easier under the meanest circumstances, it is requisite that great numbers of them should be ignorant as well as poor; knowledge both enlarges and multiplies our desires, and the fewer things a man wishes for, the more easily his necessities may be supplied."\* What Mandeville, an honest and clearsighted man, has not yet perceived is that the mechanism of the process of accumulation, while increasing capital, increases at the same time the mass of the "labouring poor", i.e. the wage workers, who transform their labour power into an increasing power of self-expansion on the part of increasing capital, and by the very fact that they do so must eternalise their dependency upon their own product, as personified in the capitalist. With regard to this condition of dependency,

\* Bernard de Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, fifth edition, London, 1728, *Remarks*, pp. 212, 213, 328.—"Temperate living and constant employment is the direct road, for the poor, to rational happiness" [by which the author probably means long working days and scanty means of subsistence], "and to riches and strength for the State" [read, for the landlords, the capitalists, and their political dignitaries and agents]. *An Essay on Trade and Commerce*, London, 1770, p. 54.

Sir F. M. Eden writes: "The natural produce of our soil is certainly not fully adequate to our subsistence; we can neither be clothed, lodged, nor fed, but in consequence of some previous labour. A portion at least of the society must be indefatigably employed. . . . There are others who, though they 'neither toil nor spin', can yet command the produce of industry, but who owe their exemption from labour solely to civilisation and order. . . . They are peculiarly the creatures of civil institutions,<sup>1</sup> which have recognised that individuals may acquire property by various other means besides the exertion of labour. . . . Persons of independent fortune . . . owe their superior advantages by no means to any superior abilities of their own, but almost entirely . . . to the industry of others. It is not the possession of land or of money, but the command of labour which distinguishes the opulent from the labouring part of the community. . . . This" [the pronoun refers to a scheme approved by Eden] "would give the people of property sufficient (but by no means too much) influence and authority over those who . . . work for them; and it would place such labourers, not in an abject or servile condition, but in such a state of easy and liberal dependence as all who know human nature and its history will allow to be necessary for their own comfort."<sup>2</sup> I may remark in passing that Sir F. M. Eden was the only one of Adam Smith's disciples during the eighteenth century to produce any work of importance.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eden would have done well to ask himself whose creatures these "civil institutions" themselves are. From his own standpoint of legalist illusion, he does not regard the law as the product of the material relations of production; but, conversely, believes that the relations of production are products of the law. Linguet gave Montesquieu's illusory *Spirit of the Laws* its quietus, with the single phrase: "The spirit of the laws is—property."

<sup>2</sup> *The State of the Poor, an History of the Labouring Classes in England*, London, 1797, vol. I, Book I, chap. I, pp. 1-2, and preface, p. XX.

<sup>3</sup> If the reader should remind me of Malthus, whose *Essay on Population* was published in the year 1798, I should like to remind him that this work, in its first form, was nothing more than a school-boyish, superficial, and parsonic declamatory plagiarism from Defoe, Sir James Steuart, Townsend, Franklin, Wallace, and others; and did not contain a single sentence thought out by Malthus himself. It was nothing but partisan interest which directed so much attention to this pamphlet. The French revolution had found ardent defenders in the kingdom of Britain. The "principle of population",

Under the conditions of accumulation hitherto postulated, conditions that are comparatively favourable to the workers,

slowly elaborated during the eighteenth century, and then, during an extensive social crisis, proclaimed with drums and trumpets as the infallible antidote to Condorcet, etc., was greeted with acclamation by the English oligarchy as the great eradicator of all hankerings after human progress. Malthus, hugely astonished at his own success, now set himself to work once more, stuffing into the old framework of his book a lot of half-digested material gathered from various sources, with new matter not discovered by him but simply annexed. It should further be noted that although Malthus was a parson in the Church of England he had taken the monastic vow of celibacy, this being one of the conditions of holding a fellowship in the Protestant university of Cambridge. ("We do not allow married fellows of the Colleges, but after any one takes a wife, he ceases to be a fellow of the College." *Reports of Cambridge University Commission*, p. 172.) This circumstance favourably distinguishes Malthus from other Protestant parsons, who have shuffled off the Catholic command of celibacy of the priesthood, and have taken the motto "Be fruitful and multiply" as their specific biblical mission, with such success that they generally contribute to the increase of population to a quite unbecoming degree, while simultaneously preaching the "principle of population" to the workers. It is characteristic that the economic fall of man, the Adam's apple, the urgent appetite, "the checks which tend to blunt the shafts of Cupid", as Parson Townsend waggishly puts it—that this ticklish matter could have been and still is monopolised by the representatives of Protestant theology, or rather of the Protestant Church. With the exception of the Venetian monk, Ortes, an original and able writer, most of the advocates of the principle of population are Protestant parsons. For instance, Bruckner's book, *Théorie du système animal*, Leyden, 1767, in which the whole subject of the modern theory of population is exhaustively discussed, and to which the passing quarrel between Quesnay and his pupil, the elder Mirabeau, furnished ideas on the same topic. Then we have Parson Wallace, Parson Townsend, Parson Malthus, and his disciple, the arch-parson Thomas Chalmers, to say nothing of miner parsonic scribblers in this line. Originally, political economy was studied by philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, and Hume; by business men and statesmen like Thomas More, Temple, Sully, De Witt, North, Law, Vanderlint, Cantillon, and Franklin; and especially, with the greatest success, by medical men like Petty, Barbon, Mandeville, and Quesnay. Even in the middle of the eighteenth century, the reverend Mr. Tucker, a notable economist for that day, thought it necessary to excuse himself for meddling with the affairs of Mammon. Later, however, when the "principle of population" came to the fore, the hour for the Protestant parsons had struck. Petty, who looked upon population as the basis of wealth, and was, like Adam Smith, an outspoken enemy of the parsons, said, as if he had a presentiment of their bungling interference, "that religion best flourishes when the priests are most mortified, as was before said of the law, which best flourisheth when lawyers have least to do". He therefore advises the Protestant

their dependency upon capital assumes a tolerable form, one which is, Eden tells us, "easy and liberal". In these

parsons, if, once for all, they decline to follow the teaching of the Apostle Paul, and to "mortify" themselves by celibacy, "not to breed more churchmen than the benefices, as they now stand shared out, will receive, that is to say, if there be places for about 12,000 in England and Wales, it will not be safe to breed up 24,000 ministers, for then the 12,000 which are unprovided for, will seek ways how to get themselves a livelihood, which they cannot do more easily than by persuading the people that the 12,000 incumbents do poison or starve their souls, and misguide them in their way to heaven". Petty, *A Treatise on Taxes and Contributions*, London, 1667, p. 57.—Adam Smith's attitude towards the Protestant clergy of his time is shown by the following. Dr. Home, bishop of Norwich, reproved him (*A Letter to A. Smith, LL.D. On the Life, Death, and Philosophy of his Friend, David Hume. By one of the People called Christians*, fourth edition, Oxford, 1784) for the reason that, in a published letter to Mr. Strahan, he "embalmed his friend David", i.e. Hume, because he told the world how "Hume amused himself on his death-bed with Lucian and whist"; and because he had the impudence to write of Hume: "I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as, perhaps, the nature of human frailty will permit." The bishop cries out, in a passion: "Is it right in you, Sir, to hold up to our view as 'perfectly wise and virtuous', the character and conduct of one, who seems to have been possessed with an incurable antipathy to all that is called religion; and who strained every nerve to explode, suppress, and extirpate the spirit of it among men, that its very name, if he could effect it, might no more be had in remembrance?" *Op. cit.*, p. 8. "But let not the lovers of truth be discouraged. Atheism cannot be of long continuance." *Op. cit.*, p. 17. Adam Smith, says the bishop, "had the atrocious wickedness to propagate atheism through the land". This by his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. "Upon the whole, Doctor, your meaning is good; but I think you will not succeed this time. You would persuade us, by the example of David Hume, Esq., that atheism is the only cordial for low spirits, and the proper antidote against the fear of death. . . . You may smile over Babylon in ruins and congratulate the hardened Pharaoh on his overthrow in the Red Sea." *Op. cit.*, pp. 21-22. One orthodox individual, a college friend of Adam Smith, writes after his death: "Smith's well-placed affection for Hume . . . hindered him from being a Christian. When he met with honest men whom he liked . . . he would believe almost anything they said. Had he been a friend of the worthy ingenious Horrox, he would have believed that the moon sometimes disappeared in a clear sky without the interposition of a cloud. . . . He approached to republicanism in his political principles." "The Bee", by James Anderson, 18 vols., vol III, pp. 164-165, Edinburgh, 1791-1793.—Parson Thomas Chalmers has his suspicions as to Adam Smith's having invented the category of "unproductive labourers" solely for the Protestant parsons, in spite of their blessed work in the Lord's vineyard.



circumstances, as capital grows, this relation does not become more intensive but merely more extensive, which means that the sphere of capital's exploitation and rule can only extend with its growth in size and with the increase in the number of its subjects. A larger part of their own surplus product, continually increasing and continually transformed into supplementary capital, comes back to them in the form of means of payment, so that they can enlarge the circle of their enjoyments, can increase their consumption fund of clothing, furniture, etc., and are in a better position for saving a trifle of money. But just as little as better clothing, better food, better treatment in general, and a larger peculium, do away with the dependency of the slave or free him from exploitation, just so little do they make an end of the dependency of the wage worker and of his being subject to exploitation. A rise in the price of labour as an outcome of the accumulation of capital, really means nothing more than that the golden chain which the worker has forged for himself has become so long and so heavy that it need not be fastened quite so tightly. In the controversies concerning this topic, the main point, the specific quality of capitalist production, has usually been overlooked. Under capitalism, labour power is not sold in order that, by its services or by its product, it may satisfy the personal wants of the buyer. What he aims at is the increase of his capital, the production of commodities which contain more labour than he pays for, which contain a portion of value that costs him nothing and can nevertheless be realised by the sale of these commodities. The production of surplus value is an absolutely necessary law of this method of production. Labour power is only saleable in so far as it preserves the means of production in their capacity as capital; reproduces its own value as capital; and further, as unpaid labour, functions as a source of supplementary capital.<sup>1</sup> The conditions of its sale, no matter whether these conditions be more favourable or less favourable to

<sup>1</sup> "The limit, however, to the employment of both the operative and the labourer is the same; namely, the possibility of the employer realising a profit on the produce of their industry. If the rate of wages is such as to reduce the master's gains below the average profit of capital, he will cease to employ them, or he will only employ them on condition of submission to a reduction of wages." John Wade, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

the worker, therefore include the necessity for its perpetual resale, and for the continually expanding reproduction of wealth as capital. Wages, as we have seen, imply from their very nature that the worker shall always furnish a definite amount of unpaid labour. Quite apart from the fact that wages may rise when the price of labour is falling, and so on, in the best event a rise of wages can only mean a quantitative decline in the amount of unpaid labour which the worker has to perform. This decline can never go so far as to threaten the whole system. Except when there is a fierce dispute as to the rate of wages (and Adam Smith showed long ago that in such a conflict, taken as a whole, the master always remains the master), a rise in the price of labour resulting from the accumulation of capital implies one of two things.

Either the price of labour keeps on rising because the rise does not interfere with the advance of accumulation. There is nothing remarkable in this, for, as Adam Smith says: "After these" [profits] "are diminished, stock may not only continue to increase, but to increase much faster than before. . . . A great stock though with small profits, generally increases faster than a small stock with great profits."<sup>1</sup> In that case it is obvious that a diminution in the amount of unpaid labour does not interfere in any way with the extension of capitalist dominion. As an alternative, accumulation may slacken in consequence of the rise in the price of labour, the reason being that the stimulus of gain is blunted. The rate of accumulation lessens. Thereupon, however, the primary cause of this diminution, the disproportion between capital and exploitable labour power, disappears. The mechanism of the process of capitalist production removes the obstacles which it temporarily creates. The price of labour falls once more to a level that is compatible with capital's need for self-expansion, no matter whether the level to which it falls be below, above, or identical with, the level that was regarded as normal before the increase in wages occurred. We see, then, that in the former case it is not the reduced rate either of the absolute or of the relative increase in labour power or in the working population which makes the capital excessive. Conversely, it is the increase in the capital which makes the exploitable labour power inadequate. In the latter case,

<sup>1</sup> Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 189.

again, it is not the increase in the absolute or relative growth of labour or of the working population which makes the capital inadequate; but, conversely, it is the decrease in the capital which makes the exploitable labour power, or rather its price, excessive. It is these absolute movements in the accumulation of capital which are reflected as relative movements in the quantity of exploitable labour power, and therefore seem to be produced by an independent movement of the latter. To put the matter in mathematical terminology, the magnitude of accumulation is the independent variable, and the magnitude of wages is the dependent one; not conversely. Thus, when the industrial cycle is in the phase of crisis, a general fall in the price of commodities is expressed as a rise in the value of money; and when the industrial cycle is in the phase of prosperity, a general rise in the price of commodities is expressed as a fall in the value of money. The so-called currency school therefore infers that when prices are high there is too little money in circulation; and that when prices are low, there is too much. Their ignorance and their complete misunderstanding of the facts<sup>1</sup> find worthy parallels in the economists who interpret the above-mentioned phenomena of accumulation as the outcome of a superfluity or a scarcity of wage workers.

The law of capitalist production (which forms the basis of the alleged "natural law of population"), amounts simply to this. The ratio between capital, accumulation, and the rate of wages, is nothing other than the ratio between the unpaid labour transformed into capital and the additional paid labour necessary for setting this supplementary capital in motion. It is, therefore, by no means a ratio between two independent magnitudes, on the one hand the magnitude of capital, and on the other the number of the working population. Nay, in the last analysis, it is only the ratio between the unpaid and the paid labour of one and the same working population. If the amount of unpaid labour supplied by the working class and accumulated by the capitalist class grows so quickly that it can only transform itself into capital by calling to its aid an exceptionally large supplement of paid labour, then wages will rise, and, other things being equal, there will be a comparative

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Karl Marx, *Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, pp. 166 et seq.

decline in the proportion of unpaid labour. But as soon as this decline reaches the point at which there is no longer a normal supply of the surplus labour by which capital is nourished, a reaction sets in. Then a smaller proportion of the revenue is capitalised, accumulation flags, and the upward movement of wages is counteracted. Thus the rise in the price of labour is restricted within limits which not only leave the foundations of the capitalist system untouched, but actually ensure its reproduction upon an increasing scale. The law of capitalist accumulation (which, by a mystification of the economists, is described as a natural law) really means nothing more than this, that its character is such as to forbid any decline in the degree of exploitation of labour or any increase in the price of labour which might endanger the constant reproduction of the capital relation and its continual reproduction on an ever enlarging scale. Things cannot be otherwise in a method of production wherein the worker exists to promote the expansion of existent values, as contrasted with a method of production wherein material wealth exists to promote the developmental needs of the worker. Just as, in the sphere of religion, man is dominated by the creature of his own brain; so, in the sphere of capitalist production, he is dominated by the creature of his own hand.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. RELATIVE DIMINUTION IN THE VARIABLE PART OF CAPITAL AS ACCUMULATION AND THE ACCOMPANYING CONCENTRATION PROCEED.

According to the economists, it is neither the actual extent of social wealth nor the magnitude of the capital already functioning that leads to a rise in wages, but only the constant growth of accumulation and the speed of that

<sup>1</sup> "If we now return to our first enquiry, wherein it was shown that capital itself is only the result of human labour . . . it seems quite incomprehensible that man can have fallen under the dominion of capital, his own product; can be subordinated to it. But since, in reality, this subordination unquestionably exists, the question is forced upon us: How is it that the worker, the creator of capital, and therefore primarily the ruler of capital, has become its slave?" Von Thünen, *Der isolirte Staat*, Rostock, 1863, part II, section II, pp. 5 and 6. Thünen did good service by asking this question, but his answer to it is childish.

growth.<sup>1</sup> Hitherto, we have only been considering one particular phase of this process, that in which the increase in capital occurs without any change in the technical composition of the capital. But in due course there is an advance beyond this stage. Once the general foundations of the capitalist system have been established in the course of accumulation, a point is always reached at which the development of the productivity of social labour becomes the most powerful factor of accumulation. Adam Smith writes: "The same cause which raises the wages of labour, the increase of stock, tends to increase its productive powers, and to make a smaller quantity of labour produce a greater quantity of work."

Apart from natural conditions (such as the fertility of the soil, etc.), and apart from the special abilities of independent and isolated producers (shown, rather, qualitatively in the goodness of their products, than quantitatively in the amount of these), the degree of the social productivity of labour is expressed in the relative amount of the means of production that one worker, during a given time (the intensity of labour power being constant), transforms into products. The quantity of the means of production with which he works, increases with the productivity of his labour. But these means of production play a double part. The growth of some of them is a consequence, and the growth of others is a cause, of the increasing productivity of labour. For instance, when, thanks to the manufacturing division of labour and thanks to the application of machinery, more raw materials are elaborated in a given time, when, that is to say, a greater quantity of raw materials and auxiliary substances enters into the labour process, this is a consequence of the increasing productivity of labour. On the other hand, the quantity of machinery, draught beasts and beasts of burden, mineral manures, field drains, etc., is a cause of the increasing productivity of labour. The same remark applies to the quantity of the means of production concentrated in buildings, furnaces, means of transport, etc. But, whether as cause or as consequence, the increasing extension of the means of production as compared with the labour power embodied in them, is an expression of the increasing productivity of labour. The increase of the latter is, therefore, shown by a decline in

<sup>1</sup> Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, book I, chap. VIII.

the quantity of labour relatively to the quantity of the means of production set in motion by that labour, or by a decline in the subjective factor of the labour process as compared with its objective factors.

This change in the technical composition of capital, this growth in the quantity of the means of production as compared with the quantity of the labour power which sets them in motion, is likewise reflected in its value composition, by the increase in the constant constituent of capital at the expense of its variable constituent. Let us suppose, for instance, that a particular capital consisted primarily to the extent of 50 % of means of production, and that 50 % of it was expended upon labour power; subsequently, thanks to the development of the productivity of labour, as much as 80 % of it may be laid out upon means of production and only 20 % upon labour power; and so on. This law that the proportion of constant capital steadily grows in comparison with the proportion of variable capital is (as was shown above) confirmed at every step by a comparative analysis of the prices of commodities, no matter whether we compare successive economic epochs in one particular country, or different countries at one and the same time. The relative magnitude of that price factor which represents only the value of the consumed means of production or the constant part of capital, is in direct ratio to the advance of accumulation; and the relative magnitude of that other price factor which is concerned with the payment of labour or represents the variable capital, is in inverse ratio to the advance of accumulation.

The decline in the variable portion of capital as compared with the constant, or the changed value composition of the capital, however, only shows approximately the change in the composition of its material constituents. If, for example, the amount of capital to-day invested in spinning is  $\frac{7}{8}$ th constant and  $\frac{1}{8}$ th variable, whereas at the beginning of the eighteenth century  $\frac{1}{2}$  of it was constant and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of it variable, we must note, on the other hand, that the mass of raw materials, instruments of labour, etc., which a certain quantity of spinning labour consumes productively to-day, is many hundreds of times greater than it was at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The reason is simply this, that, as the productivity of labour increases, there is not only an increase in the amount of the means of produc-

tion consumed by that labour, but there is also a decline in their value as compared with their quantity. True, there is an absolute increase in their value, but this increase is not proportional to the increase in their quantity. The increase in the difference between constant and variable capital is, therefore, much less than the increase in the difference between the mass of the means of production into which the constant, and the mass of the labour power into which the variable, capital is converted. The former difference increases with the latter, but to a less extent.

Furthermore, if the progress of accumulation lessens the relative magnitude of the variable part of capital, this by no means implies that the possibility of a rise in the absolute magnitude is excluded. Let us suppose that a capital value is at first divided into 50 % constant and 50 % variable capital, and that subsequently the division becomes 80 % constant and 20 % variable. If, meanwhile, the capital, from being £6000, has grown to become £18,000, then its variable constituent, which was £3000, will have become £3600, and will therefore have undergone an absolute growth to the extent of  $\frac{1}{5}$ th. But whereas formerly an increase of capital to the extent of 20 % would have sufficed to have raised the demand for labour 20 %, this now requires a tripling of the original capital.

In Part Four, I showed that the development of the social productivity of labour presupposes cooperation upon an increasing scale; that solely on this presupposition can the division and combination of labour be organised, can the means of production be economised by concentration on a vast scale. I showed that solely on this presupposition can instruments of labour which from their very nature are only suited for joint use (such as the system of machinery) be called into being; that thus only can huge natural forces be pressed into the service of production; and that thus only can the process of production be transformed into a technological application of science. On the basis of that type of commodity production in which the means of production are owned by private individuals (so that the operative either produces commodities independently of others, or else sells his labour power as a commodity because he lacks the means for independent industry), the foregoing presupposition of cooperation upon a large scale can only be realised by the growth of the individual capitals, or in

proportion to the extent to which the social means of production and means of subsistence are transformed into the private property of capitalists. Only in the capitalist form can commodity production become production upon a large scale. A certain amount of accumulation of capital in the hands of individual commodity producers is, therefore, a necessary antecedent to the specifically capitalist method of production. We had to assume that such an accumulation had occurred as part of the transition from handicraft production to the capitalist system of industry. We may call it *primary accumulation*, seeing that it is not the historical result of the specifically capitalist method of production, but the historical foundation of that system. We need not yet enquire how it comes to pass. Enough that it forms the starting-point. What we have to note is that all the methods for increasing the social productivity of labour that arise upon this foundation are, at the same time, methods for promoting an increased production of surplus value or surplus product, which is in its turn the creative factor of accumulation. They are, therefore, simultaneously, methods for the production of capital by capital, or methods of accelerating its accumulation. The continual retransformation of surplus value into capital displays itself as a steady growth of the capital engaged in the process of production. This, in turn, becomes the foundation of an increase in the scale of production, and of the accompanying methods of increasing the productivity of labour and of bringing about an accelerated production of surplus value. If, therefore, a certain amount of accumulation manifests itself to be a necessary condition of the specifically capitalist method of production, the latter conversely causes an accelerated accumulation of capital. A specifically capitalist method of production therefore develops as the accumulation of capital develops; and the accumulation of capital develops as the specifically capitalist method of production develops. Both these economic factors, in virtue of their reciprocal relationships, furnish the impetus for that change in the technical composition of capital thanks to which the variable constituent grows continually smaller in comparison with the constant.

Every individual capital is a larger or smaller concentration of the means of production, giving command over a larger or a smaller army of workers. Every accumulation



becomes the means of new accumulation. As the mass of wealth which functions as capital increases, there goes on an increasing concentration of that wealth in the hands of individual capitalists, with a resultant widening of the basis of large-scale production and of the specific methods of capitalist production. The growth of social capital is effected by the growth of many individual capitals. Other things being equal, individual capitals, and therewith the concentration of the means of production, increase in proportion to the extent to which they form aliquot parts of the total social capital. At the same time, portions break away from the original capitals, to function as new independent capitals. Apart from other causes, the division of property within capitalist families plays a considerable part in this process. With the accumulation of capital, therefore, the number of capitalists grows to a greater or less extent. Two points characterise this kind of concentration, which is directly dependent upon accumulation, or, rather, identical with it. First of all, the increasing concentration of the social means of production into the hands of individual capitalists, is, other things being equal, restricted by the extent of social wealth. In the second place, the part of social capital domiciled in each particular sphere of production is divided among many capitalists, who face one another as independent commodity producers competing one with another. Not only are accumulation and the concentration which accompanies it scattered over many points; but also, the growth of the functioning capitals is thwarted by the formation of new capitals, and the splitting up of old ones. Accumulation, therefore, presents itself, on the one hand, as increasing concentration of the means of production, and of the command over labour; and, on the other, as the mutual repulsion of many individual capitals.

This splitting up of social capital into a number of individual capitals, or the repulsion of its fragments one by another, is counteracted by their attraction. The latter is not simply a concentration of the means of production and command over labour, a concentration identical with accumulation. It is the concentration of already formed capitals, the destruction of their individual independence, the expropriation of capitalist by capitalist, the transformation of many small capitals into a few large ones. The process is dis-

tinguished from simple accumulation by this, that it involves nothing more than a change in the distribution of the capitals that already exist and are already at work. Consequently, its field of action is not restricted by the absolute extent of social wealth or by the absolute limits of accumulation. Capital aggregates into great masses in one hand because, elsewhere, it is taken out of many hands. Here we have genuine centralisation in contradistinction to accumulation and concentration.

The laws of this centralisation of capital, or of the attraction of capital by capital, cannot be elaborated at the moment. A passing allusion to the facts must suffice. The battle of competition is carried on by a cheapening of commodities. Other things being equal, the cheapness of commodities depends on the productivity of labour, which, in turn, depends upon the scale of production. Large capitals, therefore, get the better of small ones. The reader will also remember that, as capitalist production develops, the minimal size of the individual capital grows; the size that is requisite to carry on business under normal conditions. The lesser capitals, therefore, crowd into spheres of production which large-scale industry has not yet fully annexed, has conquered only here and there. In these fields, competition rages in direct proportion to the number and in inverse proportion to the magnitude of the competing capitals. It always ends in the overthrow of a number of the lesser capitalists, whose capitals to some extent pass into the hands of the conquerors, and are to some extent destroyed. Apart from this, with the growth of capitalist production there comes into being an entirely new power, that of the credit system.

To begin with, the credit system appears furtively, as it were, in the form of a modest helper of accumulation, drawing into the hands of individual or associated capitalists the monetary resources scattered over the surface of society, and doing this by means of invisible threads. Ere long, however, it becomes a new and formidable weapon in the competitive struggle; and in the end it manifests itself as a gigantic social mechanism for the centralisation of capital.

Competition and credit, the two mightiest levers of centralisation, develop concomitantly with capitalist production and accumulation. At the same time, the progress of accumulation increases the amount of material

available for centralisation, increases the individual capitals; while the expansion of capitalist production creates, on the one hand a new social demand, and on the other hand the technical means for the inauguration for those tremendous industrial undertakings which can only arise as the outcome of the centralisation of capital. To-day, therefore, the mutual attraction of individual capitals and the tendency to centralisation are stronger than ever before. But whereas the relative expansion and the energy of the centralisation movement are determined, to some extent, by the extant amount of capitalist wealth and by the superiority of the economic mechanism, the advance of centralisation is by no means dependent upon the positive growth in the magnitude of social capital. This is the characteristic distinction between centralisation and concentration, the latter being nothing more than another expression for reproduction upon an enlarged scale. Centralisation can take place as the outcome of a mere change in the distribution of already existing capitals, as the outcome of a simple change in the quantitative grouping of the constituents of social capital. It is possible for vast amounts of capital to be concentrated into one hand, because comparatively small amounts of capital are withdrawn from a number of individual hands. In any given branch of industry, centralisation would have reached its extreme limit if all the capitals invested in this industry were to be fused into one.\* In a given society, this limit would be reached if all social capital were concentrated into the same hands whether those of an individual capitalist or those of a single capitalist society.

Centralisation supplements the work of accumulation, inasmuch as it enables the industrial capitalists to extend the scale of their operations. No matter whether this consummation be brought about by accumulation or by centralisation; no matter whether centralisation be accomplished by the violent method of annexation (certain capitals becoming such powerful centres of attraction that the individual cohesion of other capitals is broken up, and the fragments of these are drawn into the orbit of the

\* Note added by Engels to the fourth edition. The latest British and American trusts strive towards this goal, their aim being to unite at least all the large concerns in a particular branch of industry into one huge joint-stock company with a practical monopoly of the business.

major aggregations), or whether the amalgamation of a number of capitals which already exist or are in course of formation, proceeds by the smoother road of the formation of joint-stock companies—the economic upshot is the same. The increasing scale of industrial establishments forms everywhere the starting-point for a more comprehensive organisation of the cooperative work of many such establishments, for a wider development of their material powers, that is, for the progressive transformation of isolated processes of production carried on in rule-of-thumb fashion, into socially combined and scientifically managed processes of production.

It is obvious, however, that accumulation, the gradual increase of capital by reproduction passing from a circular into a spiral form, is a slow process when compared with centralisation, which needs but to alter the quantitative grouping of the integral parts of social capital. The world would still lack railways if it had had to wait until the accumulation of individual capitals had proceeded far enough to render the construction of a railway possible. Centralisation, however, did what was necessary in the twinkling of an eye, by means of the joint-stock system. While centralisation thus increases and accelerates the effects of accumulation, it simultaneously increases and accelerates changes in the technical composition of capital, the constant part of which grows at the expense of its variable part, so that the relative demand for labour diminishes.

The masses of capital that are so speedily compacted by centralisation, reproduce and increase just like the others, but faster, and thus become new and powerful factors in social accumulation. When, therefore, we speak of the progress of social accumulation, we tacitly include (to-day) the effects of centralisation.

The supplementary capitals formed in the course of normal accumulation (see above, Chapter Twenty-two, 1), serve chiefly as means for the utilisation of new inventions and discoveries, especially of advances in industrial technique. But, as time passes, the moment necessarily comes when the old capital renews its head and limbs, sheds its skin, and is reborn with a perfected technique, so that a comparatively small quantity of labour will thenceforward suffice to set a comparatively large quantity of machinery

and raw materials in motion. In consequence, the necessary absolute decline in the demand for labour will, as a matter of course, be large in proportion as the capitals that undergo this process of renovation have already been aggregated into masses by the process of centralisation.

On the one hand, therefore, the supplementary capital formed in the course of accumulation attracts fewer and fewer workers in proportion to its magnitude. On the other hand, the old capital, periodically reproduced with a new composition, tends more and more to repel workers whom it used to employ.

### 3. PROGRESSIVE PRODUCTION OF RELATIVE OVERPOPULATION OR AN INDUSTRIAL RESERVE ARMY.

The accumulation of capital, which originally appeared to be nothing more than its quantitative expansion, is effected, as we have seen, by means of a progressive qualitative change in its composition, taking the form of a continuous increase in its constant constituent and a continuous decrease in its variable constituent.<sup>1</sup>

The specifically capitalist method of production, the corresponding development of the productive power of labour, and the consequent change in the organic composition of capital, do not merely keep pace with the progress of accumulation or with the growth of social wealth. Their movement is a much more rapid one; for simple accumulation, or an absolute expansion in the total capital, is accompanied by the centralisation of its individual elements; and the change in the technical composition of the supplementary capital is accompanied by a change in the technical composition of the original capital. With the progress of accumulation, therefore, there is a change in the ratio between constant and variable capital. Suppose that, originally, this ratio was 1:1, it now becomes 2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 5:1, 7:1, etc., so that as the capital grows, whereas to

<sup>1</sup> Note added by Engels to the third edition. Marx's copy of *Das Kapital* contains the following marginal note: "Here note for subsequent elaboration. If the expansion be only quantitative, then, for a greater and a smaller capital in the same branch of business, the profits are as the magnitudes of the capitals advanced. If the quantitative expansion induces qualitative change, then the rate of profit on the larger capital simultaneously rises."

begin with half of its total value was transformed into labour power and half into means of production, we now find that  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd,  $\frac{1}{4}$ th,  $\frac{1}{5}$ th,  $\frac{1}{6}$ th,  $\frac{1}{8}$ th, etc., is transformed into labour power, and, on the other hand  $\frac{2}{3}$ rds,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ths,  $\frac{4}{5}$ ths,  $\frac{5}{6}$ ths,  $\frac{7}{8}$ ths, etc., are transformed into means of production. Since the demand for labour is determined, not by the amount of capital as a whole, but by the amount of its variable constituent, this demand falls progressively as the total capital increases, instead of, as previously assumed, rising proportionally therewith. It declines relatively to the magnitude of the total capital, and at an accelerated rate, as this magnitude increases. With the growth of the total capital, its variable constituent, or the labour incorporated in it, does also increase; but in a constantly diminishing proportion. The intermediate pauses during which accumulation on a given technical basis works as simple extension of production, are shortened. Not only do we find that an accelerated accumulation of total capital (accelerated in geometrical progression) is needed to absorb an additional number of workers, or even, on account of the continuous metamorphosis of the old capital, to keep in employment those already at work. In its turn, the increasing accumulation and centralisation lead to new changes in the composition of capital, to a more accelerated reduction in its variable as compared with its constant constituent. This accelerated relative decline in the variable constituent, a decline that accompanies the accelerated increase in the total capital and proceeds more rapidly than this increase, takes the inverse form, at the other pole, of an apparently absolute increase in the working population, an increase always proceeding more rapidly than the increase in the variable capital or in the means of employment. But, in fact, it is capitalist accumulation itself that constantly produces, and produces in direct proportion to its energy and its extent, a relatively redundant population of workers; that is to say a population larger than suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital—in short, a surplus population.

The movement whereby the accumulation of social capital is brought about, sometimes causes periodical changes affecting this social capital as a whole, whereas at other times changes occur simultaneously in the various branches of production. In some spheres, a change in the composition of capital occurs without any increase in its absolute

magnitude, occurs as an outcome of simple concentration; in other spheres, the absolute growth in the capital is associated with a decline in its variable constituent, in the amount of labour power absorbed by it; in others, the capital continues growing for a time upon its extant technical basis, and attracts additional labour power in proportion to its increase; and in yet others, it undergoes organic change, its variable constituent diminishing: in all spheres, the increase in the variable constituent of capital, and therefore in the number of workers employed, is invariably associated with violent fluctuations and with the transient production of surplus population, which may take the conspicuous form of the dismissal of workers already employed, or the less evident but equally real form of increasing difficulty in the absorption of the supplementary working population through the usual channels.<sup>1</sup> With the magnitude of social capital already functioning, and the degree of its increase, with the extension of the scale of production and the increase in the number of workers set in motion, with the development in the productivity of their labour, with the extended flow of all the sources of wealth, there is also an extension of the scale on which a greater attraction of workers by capital is

<sup>1</sup> According to the census for England and Wales, the total number of persons employed in agriculture (landowners, farmers, gardeners, shepherds, etc., all included) was 2,011,447 in 1851 and 1,924,110 in 1861, the decline being 87,337. In worsted manufacture, the figures for 1851 were 102,714; and for 1861, they were 79,242. Silk weaving, 111,940 and 101,678, respectively. Calico printing, 12,098 and 12,556, respectively. In view of the enormous extension of this last industry, the increase is very small, and implies a great proportional fall in the number of workers employed. In hatmaking, 15,957 and 13,814, respectively. In straw-hatmaking and bonnetmaking, 20,393 and 18,176, respectively. In malting, 10,566 and 10,677, respectively. In candlemaking, 4949 and 4686, respectively. The falling-off in this trade is presumably due to the spread of gas-lighting. Combmaking, 2038 and 1478; sawyers, 30,552 and 31,647 (a small rise here, in consequence of the increase in machine sawing); nailmakers, 26,940 and 26,130 (a decline owing to the competition of machinery); workers in tin mines and copper mines, 31,360 and 32,041. On the other hand, the figures relating to cotton spinning and weaving show a great increase, being 371,777 and 456,646, respectively. The workers in coalmines were 183,389 in 1851, and 246,613 in 1861. "The increase of labourers is generally greatest since 1851 in such branches of industry in which machinery has not up to the present been employed with success." *Census of England and Wales for 1861*, vol. III, London, 1863, p. 36.

associated with a greater repulsion of them. Therewith, there is an increasing rapidity in the change in the organic composition of capital and in its technical form; and more and more spheres of production become involved in this change, now simultaneously, and now alternately. It is the working population which, while effecting the accumulation of capital, also produces the means whereby it is itself rendered relatively superfluous, is turned into a relative surplus population; and it does so to an ever increasing extent.<sup>1</sup> This is a law of population peculiar to the capitalist method of production; and, in fact, every method of production that arises in the course of history has its own

<sup>1</sup> The law of the progressive decline in the relative magnitude of variable capital, and the effects of this decline upon the position of the wage-earning class, had been suspected by some of the most distinguished among the classical economists, although they never fully grasped it. The most notable service in this respect was that of John Barton, although he, like the other writers of his school, lumped constant capital with fixed capital, variable capital with circulating capital. He writes: "The demand for labour depends on the increase of circulating, and not of fixed capital. Were it true that the proportion between these two sorts of capital is the same at all times, and in all circumstances, then, indeed, it follows that the number of labourers employed is in proportion to the wealth of the State. But such a proposition has not the semblance of probability. As arts are cultivated, and civilisation is extended, fixed capital bears a larger and larger proportion to circulating capital. The amount of fixed capital employed in the production of a piece of British muslin is at least a hundred, probably a thousand times greater than that employed in a similar piece of Indian muslin, and the proportion of circulating capital is a hundred or a thousand times less. . . . The whole of the annual savings, added to the fixed capital, would have no effect in increasing the demand for labour." *Observations on the Circumstances which influence the Condition of the Labouring Classes of Society*, London, 1817, pp. 16-17.—Ricardo: "The same cause which may increase the net revenue of the country, may at the same time render the population redundant, and deteriorate the condition of the labourer." *Op. cit.* p. 469.—Ricardo again: With increase of capital,—"the demand [for labour] will be in a diminishing ratio". *Ibid.*, p. 480, note.—Richard Jones: "The amount of capital devoted to the maintenance of labour may vary, independently of any changes in the whole amount of capital. . . . Great fluctuations in the amount of employment, and great suffering, may become more frequent as capital itself becomes more plentiful." *An Introductory Lecture on Political Economy*, London, 1833, p. 13.—Ramsay: "Demand [for labour] will rise, . . . not in proportion to the accumulation of the general capital. . . . Every augmentation, therefore, in the national stock destined for reproduction, comes, in the progress of society, to have less and less influence upon the condition of the labourer." *Op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.



peculiar, historically valid, law of population. It is only for plants and animals that there is a law of population in the abstract; and that only in so far as man does not interfere with them.

But if a surplus working-class population is a necessary product of accumulation, or of the development of wealth upon a capitalist basis, on the other hand this overpopulation becomes a lever promoting capitalist accumulation, and is indeed a necessary condition of the existence of the capitalist method of production. It forms an available industrial reserve army, which belongs to capital no less absolutely than if the capitalists had bred the members of this army at their own cost. For its own varying needs in the way of self-expansion, capital creates an ever-ready supply of human material fit for exploitation, and does so independently of the limits of the actual increase in population. As accumulation proceeds, and as the accompanying development in the productivity of labour takes place, capital's power of sudden expansion grows. It grows, not merely because the elasticity of the capital already functioning increases, not merely because the absolute wealth of society (the wealth of which capital forms no more than an elastic part) expands, not merely because credit is promptly induced by every special stimulus to place an exceptionally large part of this wealth at the disposal of production as supplementary capital; it grows, also, because the technical conditions of the process of production itself (machinery, the means of transport, etc.) now favour an extremely rapid transformation of surplus product into additional means of production. The mass of social wealth, become superabundant owing to the advance of accumulation, and transformable into additional capital, urgently seeks investment, either in old branches of production for whose products the market has suddenly expanded, or else in newly formed branches (such as railways, etc.), the need for which has grown out of the development of the old ones. In all such cases, it is essential that there should be a possibility of providing great masses of workers whose activities can be engaged at the decisive points without any interruption in the work of production in other spheres. Overpopulation supplies these masses. The characteristic course of modern industry, its decennial cycles (interrupted by intercurrent oscillations) of periods of average activity

production at high pressure, crisis, and stagnation, depends on the continuous formation, the greater or less absorption, and the reconstitution, of the industrial reserve army, composed of the surplus population. In their turn, the vicissitudes of the industrial cycle swell the numbers of the surplus population and become one of the most energetic agents of the reproduction of this surplus.

Such is the characteristic course of modern industry, but nothing of the kind was known in earlier ages, and it could not possibly occur during the childhood of capitalist production. For at that time the change in the composition of capital was a very slow one. As a general rule, therefore, the demand for labour grew conformably with accumulation. Slow as was the advance of accumulation, compared with what goes on in modern times, it was checked by the natural limits of the exploitable labouring population, limits which could only be done away with by the use of forcible means that will be mentioned later. A sudden and fitful expansion in the scale of production is a prelude to equally sudden and fitful contractions. The latter, in turn, evoke the former; but the former, the expansions, are impossible unless there is available human material, unless there has been an increase in the number of available workers irrespective of the absolute growth in population. This supply of available human material is dependent upon the simple fact that some of the workers are continually being "set at liberty" by methods which reduce the number of employed workers relatively to the increase in the amount of production. Thus the whole movement of modern industry is characterised by the continuous transformation of part of the working population into unemployed, or into half-timers. How very little way below the surface of things political economists are able to see, is borne witness to by the fact that they regard the expansion and the contraction of credit as the causes of the vicissitudes of the industrial cycle, when really the movements of credit are nothing more than symptoms of the phases of the industrial cycle. Just as the heavenly bodies, when they have once been started in motion along a particular path, continue that motion for an indefinite term, so does social production continue on its course, when once it has been started upon this movement of alternating expansion and contraction. What were effects, become in turn causes; and the vicissitudes of the whole

process, which continually reproduces its own determinants, assume the form of periodicity. Once this periodicity has been established, even the political economists recognise that the production of a relatively superfluous population (a population that is in excess as regards the average needs of capital for self-expansion) has become one of the conditions indispensable to modern industry.

Let us suppose, says H. Merivale, sometime professor of political economy at Oxford, and subsequently an official in the Colonial Office, "that, on the occasion of some of these crises, the nation were to rouse itself to the effort of getting rid by emigration of some hundreds of thousands of superfluous arms, what would be the consequence? That, at the first returning demand for labour, there would be a deficiency. However rapid reproduction may be, it takes, at all events, the space of a generation to replace the loss of adult labour. Now, the profits of our manufacturers depend mainly on the power of making use of the prosperous moment when demand is brisk, and thus compensating themselves for the interval during which it is slack. This power is secured to them only by the command of machinery and of manual labour. They must have hands ready by them, they must be able to increase the activity of their operations when required, and to slacken it again, according to the state of the market, or they cannot possibly maintain the preeminence in the race of competition on which the wealth of the country is founded."<sup>1</sup> Although Malthus, in his narrow-minded fashion, regards overpopulation as due to an absolute excess of growth of the working population, and not as due to a merely relative superfluity, he none the less recognises that overpopulation is necessary to modern industry. He writes: "Prudential habits with regard to marriage, carried to a considerable extent among the labouring class of a country mainly depending upon manufactures and commerce, might injure it. . . . From the nature of a population, an increase of labourers cannot be brought into market in consequence of a particular demand till after the lapse of 16 or 18 years, and the conversion of revenue into capital, by saving, may take place much more rapidly; a country is always liable to an increase in the quantity of the funds for the maintenance of labour

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Colonisation and Colonies*, London, 1841, vol. I, p. 146.

faster than the increase of population.”<sup>1</sup> After the political economists have thus declared that the continuous production of a relative surplus population of workers is essential to capitalist accumulation, they take a step further. Very aptly, on this occasion, their spokesman is an old maid, who makes her ideal capitalist address the following words to the “superfluous persons” who have been thrown into the street by the supplementary capital which their own labour has created: “We manufacturers do what we can for you, whilst we are increasing that capital on which you must subsist, and you must do the rest by accommodating your numbers to the means of subsistence.”<sup>2</sup>

The quantity of available labour power furnished by the natural increase in population is by no means adequate to the needs of capitalist production, which, if it is to have free play, must have at its disposal an industrial reserve army independent of these natural limitations.

Hitherto we have assumed that the increase or decrease in variable capital precisely corresponds to the increase or decrease in the number of workers employed.

But even if the number of workers at the disposal of capital remains constant, even if the number decreases, the variable capital increases if the individual worker supplies more labour; and his wages therefore grow, although the price of labour remains unchanged, or perhaps falls, but falls more slowly than the mass of labour increases. An increase in variable capital is, then, an indication of an increase in labour, but not an indication of an increase in the number of employed workers. It is to the direct interest of every capitalist to extract a definite amount of labour out of a smaller, rather than a greater number of workers, provided that the cost is much about the same. In the latter case, the outlay of constant capital increases in proportion to the quantity of labour set in motion; in the former case, the increase is much smaller. The more extended the scale of production, the more influential is this motive. Its force increases with the accumulation of capital.

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Political Economy*, pp. 254, 319, and 320.—In this work, Malthus finally discovers, with the aid of Sismondi, the beautiful trinity of capitalist production: overproduction; overpopulation; overconsumption: three very delicate monsters indeed! Cf. Friedrich Engels, *Umriss zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie*, “Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher,” pp. 107 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> Harriet Martineau, *The Manchester Strike*, 1842, p. 101.

We have seen that the development of the capitalist method of production and of the productivity of labour (simultaneously cause and effect of accumulation) enables the capitalist, with the same outlay of variable capital, to set in action more labour by the more effective exploitation (extensive or intensive) of each individual labour power. We have also seen that with the same capital value he can buy more labour power, inasmuch as he progressively replaces skilled workers by unskilled, mature labour power by immature, men by women, grown-ups by young persons or children.

On the one hand, therefore, with the progress of accumulation, a larger variable capital sets more labour in action without having to recruit more workers; on the other hand, a variable capital of the same magnitude sets more labour in action with the same quantity of labour power; and, finally, sets in action a greater number of individual labour powers of low grade by getting rid of individual labour powers of high grade.

The production of a relative surplus population, or the setting of workers at liberty, therefore proceeds more rapidly than the progress of accumulation (though this is accelerated by the technical revolution in the process of production), and more rapidly than the corresponding relative decline in the variable portion of capital as compared with the constant. If the means of production, when increasing in extent and effectiveness, are to a less degree means for the employment of the workers; this state of things is itself once more modified by the fact that, in proportion as the productivity of labour increases, capital's supply of effective labour increases without a proportional increase in the demand for individual workers. The overwork of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of the reserve; while, conversely, the increased pressure which, through competition, the members of the reserve exert upon those who are in work, spurs these latter on to overwork, and subjects them more completely to the dictatorship of capital. The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by overwork of the other portion, and the converse, become means for enriching the individual capitalist,<sup>\*</sup> and at the same time

<sup>\*</sup> Actually during the cotton famine of 1863, a pamphlet was issued by the cotton spinners of Blackburn which contained fierce

accelerate the growth of the industrial reserve army upon a scale corresponding to the progress of social accumulation. The example of England shows how important this factor is in the formation of a relative surplus population. The technical means for "saving" labour are enormously effective in this country. Nevertheless, if to-morrow the amount of work were generally restricted to a reasonable extent, and were once more suitably graded in accordance with age and sex for the various strata of the working class, the extant working population would be utterly inadequate for carrying on the national production upon its present scale. The great majority of the workers who are now "unproductive" would have to become "productive".

Taking them as a whole, the general movements of wages are exclusively regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army, expansion and contraction corresponding to the periodical changes of the industrial cycle. They are, therefore, not determined by variations in the absolute number of the working population, but by the varying proportions in which the working class is

denunciations of overwork (which, naturally, owing to the operation of the Factory Act, only affected adult male workers). "The adult operatives at this mill have been asked to work from 12 to 13 hours per day, while there are hundreds who are compelled to be idle who would willingly work partial time in order to maintain their families and save their brethren from a premature grave through being overworked. . . . We would ask if the practice of working overtime by a number of hands, is likely to create a good feeling between masters and servants. Those who are worked overtime feel the injustice equally with those who are condemned to forced idleness. There is in the district almost sufficient work to give to all partial employment if fairly distributed. We are only asking what is right in requesting the masters generally to pursue a system of short hours, particularly until a better state of things begins to dawn upon us, rather than to work a portion of the hands overtime, while others, for want of work, are compelled to exist upon charity." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, October 31, 1863, p. 8.—With the unerring bourgeois instinct characteristic of the man, the author of the *Essay on Trade and Commerce* grasps the effect of a relative surplus population on the employed workers: "Another cause of idleness in this kingdom is the want of a sufficient number of labouring hands. . . . Whenever from an extraordinary demand for manufacturers [operatives] labour grows scarce, the labourers feel their own consequence, and will make their masters feel it likewise—it is amazing; but so depraved are the dispositions of these people, that in such cases a set of workmen have combined to distress the employer by idling a whole day together." *Op cit.*, pp. 27–28.—The fellows were actually demanding higher wages!

split up into an active army and a reserve army, by the increase and decrease in the relative extent of overpopulation, by the degree to which the superfluous workers are absorbed into industry or again discharged. As far as modern industry is concerned, with its decennial cycle and its periodic phases (which, moreover, as accumulation advances, are complicated by irregular oscillations following each other more and more quickly), it would, indeed, be a beautiful law were the supply and demand of labour not to be regulated by the expansion and contraction of capital, by the varying needs of capital for self-expansion (so that the labour market sometimes appears relatively understocked, because capital is expanding, and at other times appears overstocked, because capital is contracting); but if, on the contrary, the movement of capital were dependent on the absolute variation of the population. Yet such is the dogma of the economists. According to them, wages rise in consequence of the accumulation of capital. The increase in wages stimulates a more rapid increase in the working population, and the increase continues until the labour market is overstocked, this meaning that capital has again become insufficient relatively to the supply of labour. Then wages fall, and now we have the reverse of the medal. Owing to the decline in wages, the working population is gradually decimated, so that once more capital is in excess relatively to the workers; or, as others explain it, the decline in wages and the corresponding increase in the exploitation of the workers once more stimulate accumulation, while, at the same time, the lowness of wages keeps the growth of the working class in check. Thus recurs the state of affairs in which the supply of labour is unequal to the demand, whereupon wages rise once more; and so on, and so on. What a delightful mode of motion for developed capitalist production! Before, as an outcome of a rise in wages, any positive growth of the population really fit for work could occur, the time during which the industrial campaign must have been fought and the issue decided would be long over and done with.

Between 1849 and 1859, when the price of grain was falling, there occurred a nominal rise of wages (for practical purposes, an insignificant one) in the English agricultural districts. In Wiltshire, for instance, weekly wages rose from 7s. to 8s.; in Dorsetshire from 7s. to 8s. or 9s. This was the

result of an unusual exodus of the agricultural surplus population, due to the demands of war, to the great extension of railway construction, the building of new factories, the opening of new mines, etc. The lower the wages, the higher the percentage of any rise in wages, however insignificant. If the weekly wage be 20s., and it rises to 22s., the rise is 10 %; if it be only 7s., and rises to 9s., the rise is 28½ %, which sounds very fine. Anyhow, the farmers complained bitterly; and the "Economist", referring to these starvation wages, prattled quite seriously about "a general and substantial advance".<sup>1</sup> What did the farmers do then! Did they wait until the agricultural labourers, thanks to so splendid a rise in wages, had increased their numbers to such an extent that wages would necessarily fall once more? That should have been the course of events according to economic dogma! What actually happened was that the farmers introduced more machinery, and in a trice the workers were again "superfluous" in a proportion satisfactory even to their employers. Now "more capital" was invested in agriculture, and in a more productive form. Thereupon the demand for labour fell, not only relatively, but absolutely as well.

The above economic fiction confounds the laws that regulate the general movement of wages—or the relation between the working class, the total labour power, on the one hand, and the total social capital, on the other—with the laws that distribute the working population among the different spheres of production. When, for instance, in consequence of a favourable concatenation of circumstances, accumulation is especially active in a particular branch of production, so that profits become greater than the average, supplementary capital flows into it, with the natural result that there is an increased demand for labour and a rise in wages. The rise in wages attracts a larger proportion of the working population into the favoured sphere, until it is glutted with labour power, and wages fall to the former average; or even lower, should the influx of workers be excessive. Thereupon, not only does the influx of workers into this branch of industry cease, but an efflux occurs. The political economist therefore thinks he understands why, when there is an increase in wages, there is an absolute increase in the number of workers, and when there is an

<sup>1</sup> "Economist," January 21, 1866.



absolute increase in the number of workers, there is a decrease in wages: but in reality, all he sees is the local oscillation of the labour market in a particular sphere of production; he sees nothing more than the phenomena of the distribution of the working population among the various spheres of capitalist investment, in accordance with the varying needs of capital.

During the periods of stagnation and average prosperity, the industrial reserve army presses upon the army of active workers; and during the periods of overproduction and boom, the former holds the claims of the latter in check. Thus relative overproduction is the background in front of which the law of supply and demand works. Relative surplus population restricts the activities of this law within the limits which are convenient to capitalist exploitation and capitalist dominion.

Here we must return to one of the grand exploits of economist apologetics. The reader will remember that if, through the introduction of new machinery or the extension of old, part of variable capital is transformed into constant, the apologist interprets this operation (which actually "fixes" capital, and thus "sets the workers free") in exactly the opposite way, declaring that it sets capital free for the workers. Only now can we fully understand the effrontery of such apologists. What are set free are not only the workers who are directly thrust out of employment by machinery, but also those who might replace them, and the additional contingent, which, with the usual extension of trade upon its old basis, would in the regular course of events be absorbed. All of them are now "set at liberty", and placed at the disposal of every new portion of capital eager to find something to do. Whether it attracts them or others, the effect upon the general demand for labour will be nil, so long as this capital is sufficient, and no more, to take out of the market exactly the number of workers whom machinery has thrown out of employment. If it gives employment to a smaller number, then the number of superfluous workers increases; if it gives employment to a larger number, then the general demand for labour increases only in proportion to the excess of the number of those given employment over the number "set at liberty". The impulse that supplementary capital seeking investment would otherwise have given to the general demand for

labour, is, therefore, in every case neutralised until the workers thrown out of employment by machinery have all been absorbed. That is to say, the mechanism of capitalist production sees to it that the absolute increase in capital shall not be accompanied by any corresponding increase in the general demand for labour. The apologists venture to declare that this is a compensation for the poverty, the suffering, and the possible destruction, of the workers who have been displaced, a compensation throughout the transition period during which they are forced into the industrial reserve army! The demand for labour is not the same thing as the growth of capital, and the supply of labour is not the same thing as the growth of the working class. We are not here concerned with two independent forces working one upon the other. The dice are loaded. Capital acts on both sides at the same time. If its accumulation, on the one hand, increases the demand for labour, on the other hand, it increases the supply of workers by "setting them at liberty"; while, at the same time, the pressure of the unemployed on the employed compels those that are employed to supply more labour, thus, to a certain extent, making the supply of labour independent of the supply of workers. On this foundation, the operation of the law of the supply of and demand for labour perfects the despotism of capital. As soon as the workers penetrate the mystery, and come to realise that, in proportion as they work more, in proportion as they produce more for others, in proportion as the productivity of their labour increases, their function as means for the self-expansion of capital involves them in ever greater dangers; as soon as they discover that the intensity of competition among themselves is entirely dependent upon the pressure of the relative surplus population; as soon, therefore, as they endeavour, by trade unionism and in other ways, to organise a purposive cooperation between the employed and the unemployed, in order that they may avert or diminish the ruinous consequences that arise for their class out of the working of this natural law of capital production—capital, and its sycophant the political economist, raise a clamour about infringement of the "eternal" and, so to say, "sacred" law of supply and demand. Cohesion between the employed and the unemployed necessarily disturbs the "unalloyed" operation of this law. On the other hand, whenever (in the colonies,

for instance) untoward circumstances hinder the creation of an industrial reserve army, and thus relieve the working class from its position of absolute dependence upon the capitalist class, My Lord Capital, duly aided by his henchman political economy playing the part of Sancho Panza, rebels against the "sacred" law of supply and demand, and tries to check its operation by forcible means and by hitting below the belt.

#### 4. DIFFERENT FORMS OF RELATIVE SURPLUS POPULATION. GENERAL LAW OF CAPITALIST ACCUMULATION.

There are manifold forms of relative surplus population. Every worker has to be classed in this category when he is unemployed or but partially employed. Ignoring the widespread periodical recurrences of unemployment, which are the outcome of the changing phases of the industrial cycle, so that unemployment is acute during the crisis and chronic whenever trade is slack—we find that relative surplus population exists continuously under three forms; a floating, a latent, and a stagnant.

In the centres of modern industry (in factories, workshops, ironworks, mines, etc.), workers are sometimes repelled, and sometimes attracted in great numbers, so that here, on the whole, the number of those employed increases, although to an extent which fails more and more to keep pace with the extension in the scale of production. In such centres, overpopulation exists in a floating form.

In factories properly so-called, and in all the great workshops where machinery plays a part or where the modern system of the division of labour is in force, lads are employed in large numbers until they reach the age of manhood. Thereupon, the majority of them are dismissed, for few of these young fellows secure permanent employment in the industry after they are grown up. Those that are dismissed constitute an element of the floating surplus population, and their numbers increase as the industry grows. Some of them emigrate, following capital that has emigrated. One result of this is that the female population grows more quickly than the male, as we see in England. It is an inherent contradiction of the movement of capital that the natural increase in the working masses is inadequate

to satisfy the requirements of the accumulation of capital, and yet is always in excess of those requirements. Capital needs growing quantities of young male workers, and diminishing quantities of adult male workers. This contradiction is not a more glaring one than the contradiction that there should be a complaint of a lack of hands at the very time when thousands are unemployed because the division of labour has chained them to some specific branch of industry.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, labour power is so quickly used up by capital, that the middle-aged worker is apt to be worn out. Such a man falls into the ranks of the superfluous, or is forced down from a higher-grade occupation to a lower-grade one. The expectation of life is especially short among the workers in large-scale industry. Dr. Lee, medical officer of health for Manchester, declared not long ago "that the average age at death of the Manchester . . . upper middle class was 38 years, while the average age at death of the labouring class was 17; while at Liverpool those figures were represented as 35 against 15. It thus appeared that the well-to-do classes had a lease of life which was more than double the value of that which fell to the lot of the less favoured citizens."<sup>2</sup> In these circumstances, the absolute increase of this section of the proletariat has to take a form which will increase its numbers, although the individuals comprising the section are so rapidly used up. That implies that the successive generations of workers have to succeed one another very rapidly (this law does not apply to other classes of the population). Such a social need is satisfied by early marriage, a necessary consequence of the condition in which the workers in modern large-scale industry live; and in part, also, it is met by the exploitation of working-class children, which puts a premium upon their production.

<sup>1</sup> During the last six months of the year 1866, from eighty to ninety thousand working people in London were thrown out of work, and yet we read in the reports for the same half year: "It does not appear absolutely true to say that demand will always produce supply just at the moment when it is needed. It has not done so with labour, for much machinery has been idle last year for want of hands." *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, October 31, 1866, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Opening address to the Sanitary Conference, Birmingham, January 15, 1875, by Joseph Chamberlain, mayor of that town, and subsequently, in 1883, president of the Board of Trade.

As soon as capitalist production has mastered the domain of agriculture, or to the extent to which this mastery has been effected, the demand for the rural working population declines, in an absolute sense, proportionally with the accumulation of the capital that functions in agriculture; and there does not occur in agriculture, as there does in non-agricultural industry, an increase of attraction to neutralise the repulsion to some extent. The result is that part of the rural population is continually on the move, in course of transference to join the urban proletariat, the manufacturing proletariat; and it is always on the watch for circumstances favourable to this transformation. (In this connexion, the term "manufacture" is used to include all non-agricultural industry.)<sup>1</sup> This source of a relative surplus population is, therefore, continually flowing. But the persistent flow towards the towns presupposes that in the rural districts there is always a latent surplus population, the extent of which only becomes obvious when the sluices are opened exceptionally wide. The agricultural labourer, therefore, has his wages kept down to the minimum, and always has one foot in the swamp of pauperism.

The third category of relative surplus population, the stagnant, forms part of the active labour army, but consists of persons whose employment is extremely irregular. It thus offers capital an inexhaustible reservoir of available labour power. The conditions of existence of those who belong to this category fall below the average conditions of the working class; and, for this reason, such persons form the material for special kinds of capitalist exploitation. Their lives are characterised by working hours of extreme length for wages of extreme lowness. We have already become acquainted with their most characteristic types

<sup>1</sup> According to the census for 1861, 781 towns in England and Wales "contained 10,960,998 inhabitants, while the villages and country parishes contained 9,105,226. In 1851, the number of towns separately classed as such in the census was 580, and their total population was almost exactly equal to that of the non-urban areas. But whereas in the subsequent ten years the population in the villages and countryside increased half a million, the population in the 580 towns increased by a million and a half (1,554,067). The increase of the population of the country parishes is 6.5 %, and of the towns 17.3 %. The difference in the rates of increase is due to the migration from country to town. Three-fourths of the total increase of population has taken place in the towns." *Census, etc.*, vol. III, pp. 11 and 12.

during our study of domestic industry. This stratum is persistently recruited from among the superfluous workers belonging to the fields of large-scale industry and of agriculture; and especially, likewise, from decaying branches of industry, such as handicraft industry when it is being crushed by manufacturing industry, and the latter, when, in its turn, it is succumbing to the competition of machine industry. The numbers of those who belong to this stagnant section of the reserve army grow in proportion as the growth of surplus population is stimulated by the increase of accumulation and its growing energy. But, apart from such recruitment, it forms a self-reproducing and self-perpetuating element of the working class, and it takes a proportionally greater part in the general increase of that class than do the other elements. In fact, not only are the numbers of births and deaths in inverse ratio to the height of wages (that is to say, to the quantity of the means of subsistence available for the various categories of workers); but the same consideration applies to the absolute size of the families, which likewise varies in inverse ratio to wages. This law of capitalist society would sound absurd to savages, or even to civilised colonists. It calls to mind the excessive reproduction of animal species that are individually weak and much preyed upon by others.\*

Finally we come to the lowest sediment of relative surplus population, which dwells in the world of pauperism. Excluding vagrants, criminals, and prostitutes—in a word, the tatterdemalion or slum proletariat—this stratum of society consists of three categories. First of all, the able-bodied. Enough to make a superficial study of the statistics of pauperism in England, and we shall find that the numbers of this section increase during every crisis, to decline as soon as trade revives. Secondly, we have orphans and pauper children. They are candidates for the industrial

\* "Poverty seems favourable to generation." Adam Smith.—According to the spirited and witty Abbé Galiani, this is the outcome of a peculiarly wise dispensation of providence: "Thus it comes to pass that the men who practise occupations of primary utility breed abundantly." Galiani, *op. cit.*, p. 78.—"Misery up to the extreme point of famine and pestilence, instead of checking, tends to increase population." S. Laing, *National Distress*, 1844, p. 69.—Having illustrated this point by statistics, Laing goes on to say: "If the people were all in easy circumstances, the world would soon be depopulated."

reserve army; and in times of great prosperity, such as 1860, they are promptly enrolled in large numbers in the active labour army. Thirdly, we have the demoralised, the degenerate, the unemployable. These are persons who succumb owing to their incapacity, an incapacity induced by the division of labour; also, persons who outlive the normal age of a worker; and, finally, the victims of industry (whose number continually grows with the spread of dangerous machinery, the increase in the mining industry, the growth of chemical factories, etc.), mutilated persons, invalids, widows, etc. Pauperism constitutes the infirmity of the active labour army, and the dead weight which has to be carried by the industrial reserve army. The production of paupers is an inevitable outcome of the production of relative surplus population; the inevitability of the existence of paupers depends upon the inevitability of the existence of relative surplus population; and the two together form indispensable conditions of the existence of capitalist production and of the development of wealth. Pauperism constitutes one of the incidental expenses of capitalist production; but capital knows how to shift this burden, for the most part, from its own shoulders to those of the working class and the lower middle class.

The greater the social wealth, the amount of capital at work, the extent and energy of its growth, and the greater, therefore, the absolute size of the proletariat and the productivity of its labour, the larger is the industrial reserve army. The available labour power has its extent promoted by the same causes as those which promote the expansive force of capital. Consequently, the relative magnitude of the industrial reserve army increases as wealth increases. But the larger the reserve army as compared with the active labour army, the larger is the mass of the consolidated surplus population, whose poverty is inverse ratio to its torment of labour. Finally, the larger the Lazarus stratum of the working class and the larger the industrial reserve army, the larger, too, is the army of those who are officially accounted paupers. *This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation.* Like all other laws, it is modified in its actual working by numerous considerations, with the analysis of which we are not here concerned.

The folly of the economic pundits who urge the workers to adapt their numbers to capital's need for self-

expansion will now be obvious. The mechanism of capitalist production and accumulation continually adapts the number of the workers to capital's need for self-expansion. The first word of this adaptation is the creation of relative surplus population, or an industrial reserve army; the last word, is the poverty of continually increasing strata of the active labour army, and the dead weight of pauperism.

The law in accordance with which a continually increasing quantity of the means of production can, thanks to the advance in the productivity of social labour, be set in motion by a progressively diminishing expenditure of human energy—this law, in a capitalist society (where the worker does not make use of the means of production, but where the means of production make use of the worker), undergoes a complete inversion, and is expressed as follows: the higher productivity of labour, the greater is the pressure of the workers on the means of employment; and the more precarious, therefore, becomes their condition of existence, namely the sale of their own labour power for the increasing of another's wealth, or to promote the self-expansion of capital. Under capitalism, likewise, the fact that the means of production and the productivity of labour grow more rapidly than does the productive population, secures expression in an inverse way, namely that the working population always grows more quickly than capital's need for self-expansion.

In Part Four, when analysing the production of relative surplus value, we saw that within the capitalist system all the methods for increasing the social productivity of labour are carried out at the cost of the individual worker: that all the means for developing production are transformed into means of domination over and exploitation of the producer; that they mutilate the worker into a fragment of a human being, degrade him to become a mere appurtenance of the machine, make his work such a torment that its essential meaning is destroyed; estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in very proportion to the extent to which science is incorporated into it as an independent power; that they distort the conditions under which he works, subjecting him, during the labour process, to a despotism which is all the more hateful because of its pettiness; that they transform his whole life into working time, and drag his wife and children



beneath the Juggernaut wheels of capital's car. But all the methods for the production of surplus value are at the same time methods of accumulation; and, conversely, every extension of accumulation becomes a means for the development of the methods of production. The result is that, in proportion as capital accumulates, the condition of the worker, be his wages high or low, necessarily grows worse. Finally, the law in accordance with which the relative surplus population, or the industrial reserve army, always balances the scope and the energy of accumulation, chains the worker to capital even more effectually than Prometheus was fastened to the rock by the fetters forged by Hephæstus. Thanks to the working of this law, poverty grows as the accumulation of capital grows. The accumulation of wealth at one pole of society involves a simultaneous accumulation of poverty, labour torment, slavery, ignorance, brutalisation, and moral degradation, at the opposite pole—where dwells the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.

Political economists have, in various different ways, drawn attention to this inherent contradiction in capitalist accumulation,<sup>1</sup> although in their disquisitions they confound it with phenomena, which, though to some extent analogous, are essentially distinct—belonging as they do to pre-capitalist methods of production.

Ortes, the Venetian monk, who was one of the greatest economists of the eighteenth century, regards this contradictory character of capitalist production as a general natural law of social wealth. He writes: "In the economy of a nation, good and evil always balance one another; abundance of wealth for some is invariably counterpoised by the lack of wealth for others. Great wealth for some is ever accompanied by an absolute privation of the necessities

<sup>1</sup> "From day to day it grows clearer that the relations of production in which the bourgeoisie moves have not a unique character, nor yet a simple character, but a duplex character; that in proportion as wealth is produced poverty is produced likewise; and that to the same extent to which there occurs a development of the forces of production, there develops also a force productive of repression; that these relations do not produce bourgeois wealth, that is to say the wealth of the bourgeois class, except by continually destroying the wealth of individual members of that class, and by producing a proletariat which is continually growing in numbers." Karl Marx, *Misère de la philosophie*, p. 116.

of life for a much larger number of persons. The wealth of a nation corresponds with its population, and its poverty corresponds with its wealth. Diligence in some compels idleness in others. The poor and the idle are a necessary consequence of the rich and the active", and so on.<sup>1</sup> About ten years after Ortes wrote, Townsend, the High Church parson, writing with characteristic brutality, glorified poverty as the necessary condition of wealth. "Legal constraint [to labour] is attended with too much trouble, violence, and noise; . . . whereas hunger is not only a peaceable, silent, unremitted pressure, but, as the most natural motive to industry and labour, it calls forth the most powerful exertions." Everything, therefore, depends upon making hunger permanent in the ranks of the working class; and for this, according to Townsend, the principle of population, especially active among the poor, provides. "It seems to be a law of nature that the poor should be to a certain degree improvident" [so improvident as to be born without a silver spoon in the mouth], "that there may always be some to fulfil the most servile, the most sordid, and the most ignoble offices in the community. The stock of human happiness is thereby much increased, whilst the more delicate are not only relieved from drudgery, . . . but are left at liberty without interruption to pursue those callings which are suited to their various dispositions." The Poor Law "tends to destroy the harmony and beauty, the symmetry and order, of that system which God and nature have established in the world."<sup>2</sup> Whereas the

<sup>1</sup> Ortes, *Della economia nazionale*, six books, 1777, Custodi's edition, modern section, vol. XXI, pp. 6, 9, 22, 25, etc.—Ortes says further (*op. cit.* p. 32): "Instead of constructing fancy systems which will do nothing to promote the happiness of the peoples, I shall confine myself to a study of the causes of their unhappiness."

<sup>2</sup> *A Dissertation on the Poor Laws, by a Wellwisher of Mankind*, 1786, republished in London, 1817, pp. 15, 39, and 41.—J. Townsend, the author of this book, the "delicate" parson from whose work Malthus frequently quoted whole pages (also from Townsend's *Journey through Spain*), himself borrowed the greater part of his doctrine from Sir James Steuart, though he was not scrupulous as to altering Steuart's text to his own liking. For instance, Steuart writes: "Here, in slavery, was a forcible method of making mankind diligent" [for the benefit of non-workers]. . . . "Men were then forced to work" [gratuitously for others] "because they were slaves of others; men are now forced to work" [gratuitously for non-workers] "because they are slaves of their necessities." But Sir James Steuart does not, like the well-fed incumbent, infer therefore

Venetian monk considered that the decree of fate which eternalises poverty is a justification for Christian charity, celibacy, the cloister, and pious foundations; the Protestant pastor finds in this same decree an excuse for damning the laws in virtue of which the poor were entitled to a pittance in the way of public relief.

"The progress of social wealth", writes Storch, "begets this useful class of society, . . . which performs the most wearisome, the vilest, the most disgusting functions, which takes on its shoulders, in a word, all that is disagreeable and servile in life, and thus provides for other classes leisure, serenity of mind, and conventional (!) dignity of character."<sup>1</sup> Storch asks himself what advantage capitalist civilisation can really have over barbarism, since the former brings with it poverty and the degradation of the masses. He can find only one answer—security!

Now consider Sismondi: "Thanks to the advance of industry and science, every labourer can produce every day much more than he requires for his own consumption. But, at the same time, while his labour produces wealth, that wealth, were he called upon to consume it himself, would make him less fit for labour." According to Sismondi, "men" [he means non-workers] "would probably prefer to do without all artistic perfection and would renounce all the enjoyments which industry provides us with, if it were necessary that all should buy them at the cost of such persistent toil as that of the workers. . . . Exertion, to-day, is divorced from its reward. We no longer find that a man works and then rests; what we find is that one man can rest because another works. . . . The indefinite multiplication of the productivity of labour can, therefore, have no other result than the increase of luxury and the enjoyment of the idle rich."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, hear Destutt de Tracy, the cold-blooded bourgeois doctrinaire, who bluntly tells us the truth: "In poor nations, the common people are comfortable; in rich nations, they are generally poor."<sup>3</sup>

that the wage labourer ought always to have hunger gnawing at his vitals. Steuart's wish is to increase the workers' wants, since this will spur them on to labour on behalf of the "more delicate".

<sup>1</sup> Storch, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> Sismondi, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 69, 80, and 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

## 5. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE GENERAL LAW OF CAPITALIST ACCUMULATION.

## A. England from 1846 to 1866

For the study of capitalist accumulation, no other period of modern society can be so fruitful as the last twenty years. During these two decades, it would almost seem as if Fortunatus' purse had been discovered. Furthermore, of all countries, England furnishes the classical example because it holds the foremost place in the world market; because in England alone is the capitalist method of production fully developed; and because, since the introduction of the free-trade millennium in 1846, the last retreat of vulgar economy has been cut off. In Part Four, I have already given sufficient indications regarding the colossal advance of production during this period, wherein the second decade greatly outsoared the first.

Although, during the last half century, the absolute growth of the English population was very great, the comparative growth, or the rate of increase, was continually falling, as the following table borrowed from the census shows:

*Annual Increase per cent of the Population of England and Wales, the figures being carried to three places of decimals.*

				Per cent.
1811-1821	..	..	..	1.533
1821-1831	..	..	..	1.446
1831-1841	..	..	..	1.326
1841-1851	..	..	..	1.216
1851-1861	..	..	..	1.141

Let us now consider the increase in wealth. As regards this matter, our surest source of information is the movement of the profits, land-rent, etc., that are subject to income tax. Excluding farmers and certain other categories of taxpayers, we find that in Great Britain from 1853 to 1864, the increase in profits liable to income tax amounted to 50.47 % or, as an annual average, 4.58 %;<sup>2</sup> the increase in the population during the same eleven-year period being

<sup>2</sup> *Tenth Report of the Commissioners of H.M. Inland Revenue*, London, 1866, p. 38.

about 12 %. The increase in land-rent subject to taxation (including houses, railways, mines, fisheries, etc.) amounted during the period from 1853 to 1864 to 38 %, or 31½ % annually. Under this head, the following categories show the greatest increase:

Increase of Income from			From 1853 to 1864.	Annual Increase.
			per cent.	per cent.
Houses	..	..	38.60	3.50
Quarries	..	..	84.76	7.70
Mines ..	..	..	68.85	6.26
Ironworks	..	..	39.92	3.63
Fisheries	..	..	57.37	5.21
Gasworks	..	..	126.02	11.45
Railways	..	..	83.29	7.57 <sup>1</sup>

If we compare the years between 1853 and 1864 in three four-year periods, we note that the rate of increase of income steadily advances. For instance, in the period 1853 to 1857, the annual increase of income derived from profits is 1.73 %; in the period 1857 to 1861, it is 2.74 %; and in the period 1861 to 1864, it is 9.30 %. The total income subject to income tax in the United Kingdom was £307,068,894, in 1856; £328,127,416, in 1859; £351,745,241, in 1862; £359,142,897, in 1863; £362,462,279, in 1864; £385,530,020, in 1865.<sup>2</sup>

The accumulation of capital has been accompanied by concentration and centralisation. Although there are no official agricultural statistics for England (they exist for Ireland), there have been voluntary returns in ten counties.

<sup>1</sup> *Tenth Report of the Commissioners of H.M. Inland Revenue*, London, 1866, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> These figures suffice for comparative purposes; but they must not be regarded as absolute magnitudes, seeing that, year by year, as much, perhaps, as £100,000,000 of income is not declared. The reports of the Inland Revenue Commissioners invariably contain complaints regarding systematic fraud, especially on the part of the commercial and industrial sections of the population liable to income tax. For instance: "A joint-stock company returns £6000 as assessable profits, the surveyor raises the amount to £88,000, and upon that sum duty is ultimately paid. Another company which returns £190,000 is finally compelled to admit that the true return should be £250,000." *Ibid.*, p. 42.

## CAPITALIST ACCUMULATION 719

These returns show that from 1851 to 1861 the farms less than 100 acres in size fell in number from 31,583 to 26,567, this meaning that 5016 had been incorporated with others to make larger farms.<sup>1</sup> Between 1815 and 1825, no personal estate valued at more than £1,000,000 came under succession duty; but between 1825 and 1855, there were eight such estates; and between the beginning of 1856 and June 1859, that is to say in three and a half years, there were no less than four estates valued at more than £1,000,000.<sup>2</sup> The extent to which centralisation has been going on is, however, best shown by a number of analyses of the income tax classed under Schedule D (a tax upon profits excluding those made by farming, etc.) during the years 1864 and 1865. I should point out, to begin with, that all income from this source over £60 per annum is liable to taxation. Such incomes in England, Wales, and Scotland, totalled in 1864 the sum of £95,844,222, and in 1865 the sum of £105,435,579.<sup>3</sup> In 1864, out of a population of 23,891,009, the number of persons taxed was 308,416; in 1865, out of a population of 24,127,003, the number of persons taxed was 332,431. The following table shows the distribution of these incomes during the two years just mentioned.

Year ending April 5, 1864.		Year ending April 5, 1865.	
Total Income from Profits.	Persons.	Total Income from Profits.	Persons.
£		£	
95,844,222	308,416	105,435,738	332,431
57,028,289	23,334	64,554,297	24,265
36,415,225	3,619	42,535,576	4,021
22,809,781	832	27,555,313	973
8,744,762	91	11,077,238	107

In 1855, there were produced in the United Kingdom 61,453,079 tons of coal, valued at £16,113,167; in 1864, the amount was 92,787,873 tons, valued at £23,197,968.

<sup>1</sup> John Bright's contention that 150 landlords own half England, and that 12 landlords own half Scotland, has never been refuted.

<sup>2</sup> *Fourth Report of the Commissioners of H.M. Inland Revenue*, London, 1860, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> These are the net incomes, after certain permissible deductions.

Of pig-iron, the production in 1855 was 3,218,154 tons, valued at £8,045,385; and in 1864, it was 4,767,951 tons, valued at £11,919,877. In 1854, the length of the railways at work in the United Kingdom was 8054 miles, with a paid-up capital of £286,068,794; in 1864, the length was 12,789 miles, with a paid-up capital of £425,719,613. In 1854, the total exports and imports of the United Kingdom amounted to £268,210,145; in 1865, to £489,923,285. The following table shows the movement of exports:

1846	..	..	..	£ 58,842,377
1849	..	..	..	63,596,052
1856	..	..	..	115,826,948
1860	..	..	..	135,842,817
1865	..	..	..	165,862,402
1866	..	..	..	188,917,563 <sup>1</sup>

After these few examples, we can easily understand the registrar general's triumphant exclamation: "Rapidly as the population has increased, it has not kept pace with the progress of industry and wealth."

Let us now turn to consider those who are the direct agents in the carrying-on of industry, those who are the actual producers of all this wealth; let us turn to the working class. "It is one of the most melancholy features in the social state of this country", says Gladstone, "that we see, beyond the possibility of denial, that while there is at this moment a decrease in the consuming powers of the people, an increase of the pressure of privations and distress; there is at the same time a constant accumulation of wealth in the upper classes, an increase in the luxuriousness of their habits, and of their means of enjoyment."<sup>2</sup> Thus did this minister speak with unction in the House of Commons on February 13, 1843. Twenty years later, on April 16, 1863, in his budget speech, he said: "From 1842 to 1852,

<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing (March 1867), the Indian and Chinese markets are again overstocked with consignments of British cotton piece-goods. In 1866, the wages of the cotton operatives were reduced by 5 %. In 1867, when there was a further reduction to the same amount, 20,000 men went on strike in Preston. [Note by Engels to the 4th German edition. This was a prelude to the crisis which came shortly afterwards.]

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, February 13; also "Times," February 14, 1843.

the taxable income of the country increased by 6 %. . . . In the eight years from 1853 to 1861, it had increased from the basis taken in 1853 by 20 %! The fact is so astonishing as to be almost incredible; . . . this intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power, . . . entirely confined to classes of property, . . . must be of indirect benefit to the labouring population, because it cheapens the commodities of general consumption. While the rich have been growing richer, the poor have been growing less poor. At any rate, whether the extremes of poverty are less I do not presume to say."<sup>1</sup> What an anticlimax! If the working class has remained "poor", only "less poor", in proportion as it produces for the propertied class "an intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power", then, from the relative point of view, it has remained just as poor. If the extremes of poverty have not diminished, they have increased, seeing that the extremes of wealth have increased. As to the alleged fall in the prices of the means of subsistence, official statistics, such as the data of the London Orphan Asylum, show an increase in price amounting to 20 % for the average of the three years 1860-1862 as compared with the three years 1851-1853. During the years 1863-1865, there was a progressive increase in the prices of meat, butter, milk, sugar, salt, coal, and numerous other necessities.<sup>2</sup> Gladstone's next budget speech, delivered on April 7, 1864, was a Pindaric dithyramb upon the growth of wealth, and upon the moderate fortune of the common people whose lot is tempered by poverty. He refers to masses of persons "on the edge of pauperism", to branches of industry in which "wages have not increased", and finally he sums up the fortunes of the working class in the words: "Human life is but, in nine cases out of ten, a struggle for existence."<sup>3</sup> Professor

<sup>1</sup> "Morning Star," April 17, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> See the official data in the Blue Book, *Miscellaneous Statistics of the United Kingdom*, Part VI, London, 1866, pp. 260-273, *passim*.—Instead of the statistics of orphan asylums, the declamations of ministerial journals when they are advocating marriage portions for the offspring of the reigning house might also serve our turn. In these lucubrations there are always abundant references to the rise in the price of the means of subsistence.

<sup>3</sup> The *Hansard* version of this passage runs: "Again, and yet more at large—what is human life, but, in the majority of cases, a struggle for existence."—The repeated and crying contradictions in Gladstone's budget speeches of 1863 and 1864 have been character-



Fawcett, for whom the restraints imposed by official considerations are not operative, says bluntly: "I do not, of course, deny that money wages have been augmented" [during the last ten years] "by this increase of capital, but this apparent advantage is to a great extent lost, because many of the necessities of life are becoming dearer" [Fawcett believes that the rise in prices is due to a fall in the value of the precious metals]. "The rich grow rapidly richer, whilst there is no perceptible advance in the comfort enjoyed by the industrial classes. . . . They" [the workers] "become almost the slaves of the tradesmen to whom they owe money."<sup>1</sup>

In the sections on the working day and on machinery, the reader has learned under what conditions the British working class created an "intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power" for the propertied classes. There we were chiefly concerned with the worker during the performance of his social function. But if we are to elucidate fully the laws of accumulation, we must also study the worker's condition outside the workshop, must study the food he eats and the dwelling in which he lives. The limits of this book make it necessary for us to confine our attention mainly to the worst-paid sections of the industrial proletariat and of the agricultural labourers, who together form the majority of the working class.

First, however, another word upon official pauperism, or upon that part of the working class which has forfeited its condition of existence, the sale of labour power, and vegetates upon public charity. In the official list of paupers for England,<sup>2</sup> in the year 1855, there were 851,369 persons; in 1856, there were 877,767; and in 1865, there were 971,433. Owing to the cotton famine in the years 1863 and 1864,

ised by an English writer (*The Theory of Exchanges*, etc., London, 1864, p. 135) by the following quotation from Molière:

For there you have the man. He jumps from black to white,  
Condemns, when morning comes, all he said overnight.  
Importunate, e'en to his own interest blind,  
As changes the fashion, he changes his mind.

<sup>1</sup> Fawcett, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-82.—As to the increasing indebtedness of the workers to the shopkeepers, this is due to the increasing uncertainty of employment, and to spells of unemployment.

<sup>2</sup> When I speak of "England", in these enumerations, Wales is always included. "Great Britain" means England, Wales, and Scotland. The "United Kingdom" includes Ireland as well.

the number of paupers increased to 1,079,382 and 1,014,978, respectively. The crisis of 1866, more severe in London than anywhere else, led in this centre of the world market (which contains a larger population than that of Scotland) to an increase of pauperism to the extent of 19.5 % in 1866 as compared with 1865, and of 24.4 % as compared with 1864. During the first months of 1867, there was a still greater increase. When analysing statistics of pauperism, two points, in especial, must be brought to the front. On the one hand, the increase and the decrease in pauperism reflect the periodical vicissitudes of the industrial cycle. On the other hand, official statistics become more and more misleading as to the actual extent of pauperism, in proportion as the accumulation of capital leads to an intensification of the class struggle, and therewith to an increase in the class consciousness of the workers. For instance, during the last two years the English press (the "Times", the "Pall Mall Gazette", etc.) has been raising a hubbub about the barbarous treatment of paupers, though in fact this is an old story. Writing in 1844, Friedrich Engels refers to precisely the same horrors leading to the same fleeting and hypocritical outcries on the part of sensation-mongers. But the terrible increase in deaths by starvation in London during the last decade bears witness to the increasing repugnance of working folk for the slavery of the workhouse,<sup>1</sup> the penitentiary of those who are unfortunate enough to be poor.

## B. The Badly Paid Strata of the British Industrial Workers

During the cotton famine of 1862, Dr. Smith was commissioned by the Privy Council to study the nutrition of the distressed cotton operatives in Lancashire and Cheshire. Prolonged observations in earlier years had led him to the conclusion that "to avert starvation diseases", the daily

<sup>1</sup> An interesting light is thrown upon the progress that has been made since the days of Adam Smith by the fact that this writer still occasionally used the word "workhouse" as a synonym for "manufactory". For example, in the opening of his chapter on the division of labour, we read: "Those employed in every different branch of the work can often be collected into the same workhouse."

diet of an average woman ought to contain at least 3900 grains of carbon and 180 grains of nitrogen; the daily diet of an average man, at least 4300 grains of carbon and 200 grains of nitrogen. For women, this implies about the quantity of nutritive material contained in 2 pounds of good wheaten bread; for men,  $\frac{1}{3}$ th more. Thus the weekly average for male and female adults must be a diet containing at least 28,600 grains of carbon and 1330 grains of nitrogen. His estimates were practically confirmed in a remarkable manner by the agreement of his figures with those relating to the pitiful quantity of nourishment with which, under stress of poverty, the cotton operatives were forced to content themselves. In December 1862, these latter figures were 29,211 grains of carbon and 1295 grains of nitrogen per week.

In the year 1863, the Privy Council ordered an enquiry into the distress prevailing among the worst nourished section of the English working class. Dr. Simon, medical officer to the Privy Council, appointed the before-mentioned Dr. Smith to carry out this work. His enquiry concerned agricultural labourers; and, among the industrial operatives, silk-weavers, sempstresses, kid-glove makers, stockingmakers, glove-weavers, and shoemakers. With the exception of the stocking-weavers, all these industrial operatives are town workers. It was made a rule of the investigation to select for examination in each category the healthiest families, those which were best off.

The general result of the enquiry was that "in only one of the examined classes of indoor operatives did the average nitrogen just exceed, while in another it nearly reached, the estimated standard of bare sufficiency,<sup>1</sup> and that in two classes there was defect—in one a very large defect—of both nitrogen and carbon. Moreover, as regards the examined families of the agricultural population, it appeared that more than a fifth were with less than the estimated sufficiency of carbonaceous food, that more than one-third were with less than the estimated sufficiency of nitrogenous food, and that in three counties (Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Somersetshire), insufficiency of nitrogenous food was the average local diet."<sup>2</sup> Among agricultural labourers, those of England were the most poorly nourished, though

<sup>1</sup> This meaning, enough to ward off starvation diseases.

<sup>2</sup> *Public Health, Sixth Report, 1864, p. 12.*

England is the richest part of the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The stress of the insufficiency of food among agricultural workers was borne mainly by the women and children, for "the man must eat to do his work". The urban operatives who came within the scope of the enquiry suffered even more severely. "They are so ill-fed that assuredly among them there must be many cases of severe and injurious privation."<sup>2</sup> There is also "privation" on the part of the capitalist. He deprives himself of the privilege of paying a sufficient wage, a wage such as his "hands" need for the barest subsistence!

The following table enables us to compare the actual amount of nutriment secured by the before-mentioned categories of urban operatives, with what Dr. Smith described as the minimum requisite for the cotton operatives during the period of their extremest need:

Both Sexes.	Average Weekly Carbon.	Average Weekly Nitrogen.
Five urban occupations .. ..	Grains. 28,876	Grains. 1,192
Unemployed Lancashire operatives..	28,211	1,295
Minimum quantity to be allowed to the Lancashire operatives (average struck between the sexes) ..	28,600	1,330 <sup>3</sup>

One-half (to be precise, 60 out of 125) of the industrial operatives who came within the scope of the enquiry, received absolutely no beer; 28 %, no milk. The weekly average of liquid nourishment in the families varied from 7 ozs. in the sempstresses to 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  ozs. in the stockingmakers. The majority of those who got no milk were London sempstresses. The quantity of breadstuffs consumed weekly varied from 7 $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. among the sempstresses to 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. among the shoemakers, and there was a total average of 9.9 lbs. weekly for adults. Sugar (treacle, etc.) varied from 4 ozs. weekly for the kid-glove makers to 11 ozs. for the stockingmakers; the total average per week for all categories of adults being 8 ozs. The total weekly average of butter

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, appendix, p. 232.

(or fat of other kinds) was 5 ozs. per adult. The weekly average of meat (including bacon) varied per adult from  $7\frac{1}{4}$  ozs., among the silk-weavers, to  $18\frac{1}{4}$  ozs., among the kid-glove makers; the weekly average for the various categories being 13.6 ozs. The weekly cost of food per adult was (average figures): silk-weavers, 2s.  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d.; sempstresses, 2s. 7d.; kid-glove makers, 2s.  $9\frac{1}{2}$ d.; shoemakers, 2s.  $7\frac{3}{4}$ d.; stockingmakers, 2s.  $6\frac{1}{4}$ d. In the case of the Macclesfield silk-weavers, the average was only 1s.  $8\frac{1}{2}$ d. The worst categories were the sempstresses, the silk-weavers and the kid-glove makers.<sup>1</sup>

Commenting upon these facts in his General Health Report, Dr. Simon writes: "That cases are innumerable in which defective diet is the cause or the aggravator of disease, can be affirmed by any one who is conversant with Poor Law medical practice, or with the wards and outpatient rooms of hospitals. . . . Yet in this point of view, there is, in my opinion, a very important sanitary context to be added. It must be remembered that privation of food is very reluctantly borne, and that as a rule great poorness of diet will only come when other privations have preceded it. Long before insufficiency of diet is a matter of hygienic concern, long before the physiologist would think of counting the grains of nitrogen and carbon which intervene between life and starvation, the household will have been utterly destitute of material comfort; clothing and fuel will have been even scantier than food—against inclemencies of weather there will have been no adequate protection—dwelling space will have been stinted to the degree in which overcrowding produces or increases disease; of household utensils and furniture there will have been scarcely any—even cleanliness will have been found costly or difficult, and if there still be self-respectful endeavours to maintain it, every such endeavour will represent additional pangs of hunger. The home, too, will be where shelter can be cheapest bought; in quarters where commonly there is least fruit of sanitary supervision, least drainage, least scavenging, least suppression of public nuisances, least or worst water supply, and, if in town, least light and air. Such are the sanitary dangers to which poverty is almost certainly exposed, when it is poverty enough to imply scantiness of food. And while the sum of them is of terrible magnitude

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 232 and 233.

against life, the mere scantiness of food is in itself of very serious moment. . . . These are painful reflections, especially when it is remembered that the poverty to which they advert is not the deserved poverty of idleness. In all cases it is the poverty of working populations. Indeed, as regards the indoor operatives, the work which obtains the scanty pittance of food, is for the most part excessively prolonged. Yet evidently it is only in a qualified sense that the work can be deemed self-supporting. . . . And on a very large scale the nominal self-support can be only a circuit, longer or shorter, to pauperism."<sup>1</sup>

The intimate connexion between the pangs of hunger in the most industrious strata of the working class, and that extravagant consumption on the part of the rich (no matter whether the extravagance be crude or comparatively refined) of which capitalist accumulation is the basis, discloses itself only to those who are acquainted with economic laws. Housing conditions are much easier to understand. No unprejudiced observer can fail to see that the more highly centralised the means of production, the more must there be a crowding together of workers upon a narrow space, this implying that the faster the progress of capitalist accumulation, the more unsatisfactory will be the housing conditions of the workers. The "improvement" of towns which accompanies an increase of wealth, the demolition of badly built quarters, the building of sumptuous edifices for banks, large shops, etc., the widening of streets for business traffic or for the equipages of the well-to-do, the construction of tramways, and the like, can hardly fail to drive the poor into even more sordid and overcrowded slums. On the other hand, every one knows that house-rent is inversely proportional to the goodness of the accommodation, and that speculators in houses exploit the mines of poverty with so much profit and so little cost as would have made the mouths of those who owned the silver mines of Potosi water. The contradictions implicit in capitalist accumulation, and therefore in capitalist property relations generally,<sup>2</sup> are so obvious in this case that even the official

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> "In no particular have the rights of persons been so avowedly and shamefully sacrificed to the rights of property as in regard to the lodging of the labouring class. Every large town may be looked

English reports of housing conditions abound with heterodox onslaughts upon property and its rights. With the development of industry, the accumulation of capital, the growth of towns and their "improvement", the evil advances with such giant strides, that between 1847 and 1864 the fear of the spread of contagious diseases (whose progress is not stayed even by "respectability") led to the passing of no less than ten Acts of Parliament dealing with sanitation. In some towns, too, such as Liverpool, Glasgow, etc., the alarmed bourgeoisie had recourse to municipal action. Nevertheless Dr. Simon, in his report of 1865, writes: "Speaking generally it must be said that the evils are uncontrolled in England." In 1864, by order of the Privy Council, an enquiry was made into the housing conditions of agricultural labourers; and in 1865, there was another enquiry, concerning the poorer classes in the towns. The results of the masterly activities of Dr. Julian Hunter will be found in the *Seventh and Eighth Reports on Public Health*. To the agricultural labourers, I shall come later. As concerns the housing conditions of urban operatives, I shall quote, to begin with, a general remark made by Dr. Simon: "Although my official point of view is one exclusively physical, common humanity requires that the other aspect of this evil should not be ignored. . . . In its higher degrees, 'overcrowding' almost necessarily involves such negation of all delicacy, such unclean confusion of bodies and bodily functions, such exposure of animal and sexual nakedness, as is rather bestial than human. To be subject to these influences is a degradation which must become deeper and deeper for those on whom it continues to work. To children who are born under its curse, it must often be a very baptism into infamy. And beyond all measure hopeless is the wish that persons thus circumstanced should ever in other respects aspire to that atmosphere of civilisation which has its essence in physical and moral cleanliness."<sup>1</sup>

In respect of overcrowding and of dwellings absolutely unfit for human habitation, London leads the way. Dr. Hunter tells us that he feels clear on two points: first, that

upon as a place of human sacrifice, a shrine where thousands pass yearly through the fire as offerings to the Moloch of avarice."

S. Laing, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>1</sup> *Public Health, Eighth Report*, 1865, p. 14, note.

there are some twenty colonies in London, of about 10,000 persons each, the misery of whose condition exceeds almost anything he has seen elsewhere in England, and is almost entirely the result of their bad housing accommodation; and, secondly, that the crowded and dilapidated condition of the houses of these colonies is much worse than was the case twenty years ago.<sup>1</sup> "It is not too much to say that life in parts of London and Newcastle is infernal."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the comparatively well-to-do sections of the working class, including the small shopkeepers and other elements of the lower middle class, tend in London to become increasingly subject to the curse of these abominable housing conditions, this happening more and more in proportion as "improvements" involving the demolition of old streets and old houses are carried out, in proportion as more factories are built in the metropolis with a consequent influx of population, and in proportion as house-rents are forced up by the exactions of the ground landlords. "Rents have become so heavy, that few labouring men can afford more than one room."<sup>3</sup> There is very little house property in London that is not burdened by a great number of middlemen. The price of land in London is always very high in comparison with the yearly income derivable from it, for every purchaser gambles on the chance of sooner or later getting a "jury price"<sup>4</sup> for his bargain, or of pocketing some exceptional increment of value due to the proximity of a great undertaking. As a consequence of this, there is a regular trade in the purchase of "fag-ends of leases". Of course "gentlemen in this business may be fairly expected to do as they do—get all they can from the tenants while they have them, and leave as little as they can for their

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 89.—With reference to the children in these colonies, Dr. Hunter says: "People are not now alive to tell us how children were brought up before this age of dense agglomerations of poor began, and he would be a rash prophet who should tell us what future behaviour is to be expected from the present growth of children, who, under circumstances probably never before paralleled in this country, are now completing their education for future practice as 'dangerous classes' by sitting up half the night with persons of every age, half-naked, drunken, obscene, and quarrelsome." *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Officer of Health of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields*, 1865.

<sup>4</sup> A "jury price" is the price fixed by a jury when land is compulsorily expropriated.



successors".<sup>1</sup> Since the rents are collected weekly, the owners of this class of house property run no risk. Owing to the extension of railway construction within town limits, "the spectacle has lately been seen in the east of London of a number of families wandering about some Saturday night with their scanty worldly goods on their backs without any resting place but the workhouse".<sup>2</sup> The workhouses are overcrowded, and the town "improvements" already voted by parliament have only just begun. When workers are driven out of their homes by demolitions, they seldom quit the parish, and at most will merely cross the border into the next. "They try, of course, to remain as near as possible to their workshops. The inhabitants do not go beyond the same or the next parish, parting their two-room tenements into single rooms, and crowding even those. . . . Even at an advanced rent, the people who are displaced will hardly be able to get an accommodation so good as the meagre one they have left. . . . Half the workmen . . . of the Strand . . . walked two miles to their work."<sup>3</sup> This same Strand, a main thoroughfare which gives the stranger an imposing impression of the wealth of London, can serve as an example of the way in which, in that great city, human beings are packed like sardines. In one parish of the Strand district, the medical officer of health reckoned that there were 581 persons per acre, although half the width of the Thames was counted in. It is obvious that every sanitary measure which, as has hitherto been the case in London, hunts the workers from any quarter because the uninhabitable houses there are destroyed, can only crowd them more closely than ever in some other quarter. Says Dr. Hunter: "Either the whole proceeding will of necessity stop as an absurdity, or the public compassion [!] be effectually aroused to the obligation which may now be without exaggeration called national, of supplying cover to those who, by reason of their having no capital, cannot provide it for themselves, though they can by periodical payments reward those who will provide it for them."<sup>4</sup> We cannot but admire capitalist justice. The landowner, the houseowner, the man of business, if expropriated by "improvements" such as railway construction, rebuilding of streets, and the like, does not merely receive full compensation. In addition, by laws both

<sup>1</sup> *Public Health, Eighth Report, 1865, p. 91.*

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit., p. 88.*

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit., p. 88.*

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit., p. 89.*

human and divine, he is comforted for his forced "abstinence" by a thumping profit. The worker, with his wife, his children, and his poor possessions, is thrown into the street; and, if he and too many of his kind crowd into some quarter of the town where the vestry insists on decency, he will be prosecuted in the name of sanitation!

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, London was the only town in England with a population of more than 100,000. There were only five other towns with a population of more than 50,000. Now [1867] there are 28 towns with a population of more than 50,000. "The result of this change is, not only that the class of town people is enormously increased, but the old close-packed little towns are now centres, built round on every side, open nowhere to air, and, being no longer agreeable to the rich, are abandoned by them for the pleasanter outskirts. The successors of these rich are occupying the larger houses at the rate of a family to each room;<sup>1</sup> . . . and a population for which the houses were not intended and quite unfit, has been created, whose surroundings are truly degrading to the adults and ruinous to the children."<sup>2</sup> The more rapidly capital accumulates in an industrial or commercial town, the quicker is the inflow of exploitable human material, and the more wretched are the improvised habitations of the workers.

Newcastle-on-Tyne, being the centre of a coal and iron district which grows more and more productive, takes the next place after London in the housing inferno. There, not less than 34,000 persons are housed in single-roomed tenements. In Newcastle and Gateshead, great numbers of houses have recently been demolished by the authorities as dangerous to the community. But whereas trade makes rapid advances, the building of new houses goes on very slowly. In 1865, the town was more overcrowded than ever before. Hardly a vacant room was to be found anywhere. Dr. Embleton, of the Newcastle Fever Hospital, says: "There can be little doubt that the great cause of the continuance and spread of the typhus has been the overcrowding of human beings, and the uncleanness of their dwellings. The rooms in which labourers in many cases live are situated in confined and unwholesome yards or courts, and for space, light, air, and cleanliness, are models of insufficiency and

<sup>1</sup> Often with "accommodation" for two or three lodgers as well

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

insalubrity, and a disgrace to any civilised community; in them, men, women, and children lie at night huddled together; and as regards the men, the night-shift succeeds the day-shift, and the day-shift the night-shift in unbroken series, for some time together, the beds having scarcely time to cool; the whole house badly supplied with water and worse with privies; dirty, unventilated, and pestiferous."<sup>1</sup> The weekly price of such filthy holes ranges from 8d. to 3s. "The town of Newcastle-on-Tyne", says Dr. Hunter, "contains a sample of the finest tribe of our countrymen, often sunk by external circumstances of house and street into an almost savage degradation."<sup>2</sup>

Owing to the movement of capital and labour to and fro, the housing conditions in an industrial town may be tolerable to-day and abominable to-morrow. Perhaps the urban sanitary authority at length makes up its mind to put an end to the worst abuses, and may do its utmost to this effect. Next day, a swarm of tatterdemalion Irishmen or decayed English agricultural labourers will crowd into the place like locusts. They are stowed away in cellars and garrets; or what has hitherto been a respectable working-class house is transformed into a lodging-house, whose inhabitants change as quickly as did the billets in the Thirty Years War. Look at Bradford, in Yorkshire. There the municipality, not long ago, had been busied with urban improvements. Besides, in 1861, there were still no less than 1751 uninhabited houses in the town. Then came a revival of trade, that revival over which the moderate liberal, Mr. Forster, the friend of the negroes, recently crowed so heartily. Of course with the revival of trade there came an influx on the part of the ever fluctuating "reserve army of labour" or "relative surplus population". According to the list<sup>3</sup> which Dr. Hunter procured from a life-insurance agent,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> COLLECTING AGENTS' LIST (BRADFORD).

HOUSES.

Vulcan Street, No. 122	..	..	1 room	16 persons
Lumley Street, No. 13	..	..	1 "	11 "
Bower Street, No. 41	..	..	1 "	11 "
Portland Street, No. 112	..	..	1 "	10 "
Hardy Street, No. 17	..	..	1 "	10 "
North Street, No. 18	..	..	1 "	16 "
North Street, No. 17	..	..	1 "	13 "

the abominable cellar dwellings and other wretched tenements were for the most part inhabited by well-paid workers. They declared that they would gladly have paid for better rooms if any were to be had. Meanwhile they degenerate and fall sick, one and all, while Mr. Forster, M.P., the moderate liberal, weeps in excess of joy over the blessings of free trade and the profits which the eminent worsted-makers of Bradford manage to net. In the report of September 15, 1865, Dr. Bell, one of the Poor Law medical officers in Bradford, ascribes the terrible mortality of fever patients in his district to the housing conditions: "In one small cellar measuring 1500 cub. ft., . . . there are 10 persons. . . . Vincent Street, Green Aire Place, and the Leys include 223 houses having 1450 inhabitants, 435 beds, and 36 privies. . . . The beds—and in that term I include any roll of dirty old rags, or an armful of shavings—have an average of 3.3 persons to each, many have 5 and 6 persons to each, and some people, I am told, are absolutely without beds; they sleep in their ordinary clothes, on the bare boards—young men and women, married and unmarried, all together. I need scarcely add that many of these dwellings are dark, damp, dirty, stinking holes, utterly unfit for human habitations; they are the centres from which disease and death are distributed amongst those in better circumstances, who have allowed them to fester in our

Wymer Street, No. 191	..	..	1 room	8 adults
Jowett Street, No. 56	..	..	1 "	12 persons
George Street, No. 150	..	..	1 "	3 families
Rifle Court Marygate, No. 11	..	..	1 "	11 persons
Marshall Street, No. 28	..	..	1 "	10 "
Marshall Street, No. 49	..	..	3 "	3 families
George Street, No. 128	..	..	1 "	18 persons
George Street, No. 130	..	..	1 "	16 "
Edward Street, No. 4	..	..	1 "	17 "
George Street, No. 49	..	..	1 "	2 families
York Street, No. 34	..	..	1 "	2 "
Salt Pie Street (bottom)	..	..	2 "	26 persons

## CELLARS.

Regent Square	..	..	1 cellar	8 persons
Acre Street	..	..	1 "	7 "
Roberts Court, No. 33	..	..	1 "	7 "
Back Pratt Street, used as a brazier's shop	..	..	1 "	7 "
Ebenezer Street, No. 27	..	..	1 "	6 "

midst.”<sup>1</sup> In the wretchedness of its working-class housing conditions, Bristol takes the third place after London. “Bristol, where the blankest poverty and domestic misery abound in the wealthiest town of Europe.”<sup>2</sup>

### C. The Nomadic Population

We must now turn to another stratum of the population, persons whose origin is rural, while their occupation is for the major part industrial. They form the light infantry of capital, which moves them rapidly from point to point, as its need for them varies. When they are not on the march, they “camp”. Nomadic labour is used for various building and draining operations, for brickmaking, lime-burning, railway construction, and the like. A flying column of pestilence, it carries into the regions in whose neighbourhood it pitches its tents, small-pox, typhus, cholera, scarlet fever, etc.<sup>3</sup> In undertakings that involve a large outlay of capital, such as railway construction, the contractor generally provides his army with wooden huts or something of the sort, improvised villages devoid of sanitary requirements, lying outside the control of the local authorities. They are extremely profitable to the contractor, who exploits the workers in a twofold fashion, as soldiers in the industrial army and as tenants. According as a hutment contains one, two, or three dens, its inhabitant, navvy or whatever he may be, has to pay 1s., 2s., or 3s. a week.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Simon tells us that in September 1864, the chairman of the Nuisances Removal Committee of the parish of Sevenoaks sent the following indictment to Sir George Grey, the home secretary: “Smallpox cases were rarely heard of in this parish until about twelve months ago. Shortly before that time, the works for a railway from Lewisham to Tonbridge were commenced here, and, in addition to the principal works being in the immediate neighbourhood of this town, here was also established the depot for the whole of the works, so that a large number of persons was of necessity employed here. As cottage accommodation could not be obtained for them all, huts were built in several places along the line of the works by

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Public Health, Seventh Report*, London, 1864, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

the contractor, Mr. Jay, for their especial occupation. These huts possessed no ventilation nor drainage, and, besides, were necessarily overcrowded, because each occupant had to accommodate lodgers, whatever the number of his own family might be, although there were only two rooms to each tenement. The consequences were, according to the medical report we received, that in the night-time these poor people were compelled to endure all the horror of suffocation to avoid the pestiferous smells arising from the filthy, stagnant water, and the privies close under the windows. Complaints were at length made to the Nuisances Removal Committee by a medical gentleman who had occasion to visit these huts, and he spoke of their condition as dwellings in the most severe terms, and he expressed his fears that some very serious consequences might ensue, unless some sanitary measures were adopted. About a year ago, Mr. Jay promised to appropriate a hut, to which persons in his employ, who were suffering from contagious diseases, might at once be removed. He repeated that promise on the 23rd July last, but although since the date of the last promise there have been several cases of smallpox in his huts, and two deaths from the same disease, yet he has taken no steps whatever to carry out his promise. On the 9th September instant, Mr. Kelson, surgeon, reported to me further cases of smallpox in the same huts, and he described their condition as most disgraceful. I should add for your information, that an isolated house, called the pest-house, which is set apart for parishioners who might be suffering from infectious diseases, has been continually occupied by such patients for many months past, and is also now occupied; that in one family five children died from smallpox and fever; that from the 1st April to the 1st September this year, a period of five months, there have been no fewer than ten deaths from smallpox in the parish, four of them being in the huts already referred to; that it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of persons who have suffered from that disease, although they are known to be many, from the fact of the families keeping it as private as possible."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 18, note.—The relieving officer of the Chapel-en-le-Frith Union reported to the registrar general as follows: "At Dove-holes, a number of small excavations have been made into a large hillock of lime ashes (the refuse of limekilns) and which are used as

water, the absence of privies, and the frequent placing of one house on the top of another, or distribution into flats; . . . the lessee acts as if the whole colony were encamped, not resident."<sup>1</sup>

"In pursuance of my instructions," says Dr. Stevens, "I visited most of the large colliery villages in the Durham Union. . . . With very few exceptions, the general statement that no means are taken to secure the health of the inhabitants would be true of all of them. . . . All colliers are 'bound' to the colliery lessee or owner for twelve months. . . . If the colliers express discontent, or in any way annoy the 'viewer', a mark or memorandum is made against their names, and, at the annual 'binding', such men are turned off. . . . It appears to me that no part of the 'truck system' could be worse than what obtains in these densely-populated districts. The collier is bound to take as part of his hiring a house surrounded with pestiferous influences; he cannot help himself, and it appears doubtful whether any one else can help him except his proprietor (he is, to all intents and purposes, a serf), and his proprietor first consults his balance-sheet, and the result is tolerably certain. The collier is also often supplied with water by the proprietor, which, whether it be good or bad, he has to pay for, or rather he suffers a deduction for from his wages."<sup>2</sup>

When it comes into conflict with "public opinion", or with the medical officers of health, capital makes no bones about "justifying" the conditions (partly dangerous and partly degrading) which it imposes upon the working and the home life of the miner. The justification takes the form that the conditions in question are essential to profit-making. We saw that this was what happened when capital "abstained" from the provision of appliances for the protection of factory workers against dangerous machinery, or from the supply of means for ventilating the mines and for making them safer. The same plea is made in excuse of the housing conditions of the miners. Dr. Simon, medical officer to the Privy Council, in his official report, says: "In apology for the wretched household accommodation . . . it is alleged that mines are commonly worked on lease;

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 180 and 182.

<sup>2</sup> The term "bound", like the term "bondage", dates from the age of serfdom.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 515 and 517.

that the duration of the lessee's interest (which in collieries is commonly for twenty-one years) is not so long that he should deem it worth his while to create good accommodation for his labourers, and for the tradespeople and others whom the work attracts; that even if he were disposed to act liberally in the matter, this disposition would commonly be defeated by his landlord's tendency to fix on him, as ground-rent, an exorbitant additional charge for the privilege of having on the surface of the ground the decent and comfortable village which the labourers of the subterranean property ought to inhabit, and that prohibitory price (if not actual prohibition) equally excludes others who might desire to build. It would be foreign to the purpose of this report to enter upon any discussion of the merits of the above apology. Nor here is it even needful to consider where it would be that, if decent accommodation were provided, the cost . . . would eventually fall—whether on landlord, or lessee, or labourer, or public. But in presence of such shameful facts as are vouched for in the annexed reports [those of Dr. Hunter, Dr. Stevens, etc.] a remedy may well be claimed. . . . Claims of landlordship are being so used as to do great public wrong. The landlord in his capacity of mineowner invites an industrial colony to labour on his estate, and then in his capacity of surface-owner makes it impossible that the labourers whom he collects should find proper lodging where they must live. The lessee [the capitalist exploiter] meanwhile has no pecuniary motive for resisting that division of the bargain; well knowing that if its latter conditions be exorbitant, the consequences fall not on him, that his labourers on whom they fall have not education enough to know the value of their sanitary rights, that neither the obscenest lodging nor the foulest drinking water will be appreciable inducements towards a 'strike'.”<sup>1</sup>

#### D. Effect of Crises on the Better-Paid Part of the Working Class

Before I turn to consider the agricultural labourers, I wish to give an example showing how crises affect even the better-paid portion of the working class, the labour aristoc-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 16.



racy. The reader will remember that the year 1857 was characterised by one of the great crises with which the industrial cycle always ends. The next cycle was due to terminate in the year 1866. The effects of the crisis in the factory districts proper had, however, been anticipated by the cotton famine. Much capital had been hunted out of its usual sphere into the chief centres of the money market, and for this reason the crisis now assumed a predominantly financial character. Its outbreak in May 1866 was signalled by the failure of one of the leading London banks, this being promptly followed by the collapse of a number of bubble companies. One of the great London branches of industry involved in the catastrophe was the building of iron ships. During the giddy period of speculation, the magnates of this branch of industry had not only engaged in overproduction to an enormous extent, but had also undertaken huge contracts for others, acting on the supposition that the sources of credit would continue to flow abundantly. Now there ensued a terrible reaction, which has lasted to the time of this writing [the end of March 1867] in other London industries.<sup>1</sup> To show the condition of the workers, I will now quote the circumstantial report of a correspondent of the "Morning Star", who, in the end of 1866 and the beginning of 1867, visited the chief centres of distress: "In the East End districts of Poplar, Millwall, Greenwich, Deptford, Limehouse, and Canning Town, at least 15,000 workmen and their families were in a state of utter destitution, and 3000 skilled mechanics were breaking stones in the workhouse yard (after distress of over half a year's duration). ' . . I had great difficulty in reaching the

<sup>1</sup> "Wholesale starvation of the London Poor. . . . Within the last few days the walls of London have been placarded with large posters, bearing the following remarkable announcement: 'Fat oxen! Starving men! The fat oxen from their palace of glass have gone to feed the rich in their luxurious abode, while the starving men are left to rot and die in their wretched dens.' The placards bearing these ominous words are put up at certain intervals. No sooner has one set been defaced or covered over, than a fresh set is placarded in the former, or some equally public place. . . . This . . . reminds one of the secret revolutionary associations which prepared the French people for the events of 1789. . . . At this moment, while English workmen with their wives and children are dying of cold and hunger, there are millions of English gold—the produce of English labour—being invested in Russian, Spanish, Italian, and other foreign enterprises." "Reynolds' Newspaper", January 20, 1867.

workhouse door, for a hungry crowd besieged it. . . . They were waiting for their tickets, but the time had not yet arrived for the distribution. The yard was a great square place with an open shed running all round it, and several large heaps of snow covered the paving-stones in the middle. In the middle, also, were little wicker-fenced spaces, like sheep pens, where in finer weather the men worked; but on the day of my visit the pens were so snowed up that nobody could sit in them. Men were busy, however, in the open shed breaking paving-stones into macadam. Each man had a big paving-stone for a seat, and he chipped away at the rime-covered granite with a big hammer until he had broken up, and think! five bushels of it, and then he had done his day's work, and got his day's pay—threepence and an allowance of food. In another part of the yard was a rickety little wooden house, and when we opened the door of it, we found it filled with men who were huddled together shoulder to shoulder, for the warmth of one another's bodies and breath. They were picking oakum and disputing the while as to which could work the longest on a given quantity of food—for endurance was the point of honour. Seven thousand . . . in this one workhouse . . . were recipients of relief; . . . many hundreds of them . . . it appeared, were, six or eight months ago, earning the highest wages paid to artisans. . . . Their number would be more than doubled by the count of those who, having exhausted all their savings, still refuse to apply to the parish, because they have a little left to pawn. Leaving the workhouse, I took a walk through the streets, mostly of little one-storey houses, that abound in the neighbourhood of Poplar. My guide was a member of the Committee of the Unemployed. . . . My first call was on an ironworker who had been seven-and-twenty weeks out of employment. I found the man with his family sitting in a little back room. The room was not bare of furniture, and there was a fire in it. This was necessary to keep the naked feet of the young children from getting frost-bitten, for it was a bitterly cold day. On a tray in front of the fire lay a quantity of oakum, which the wife and children were picking in return for their allowance from the parish. The man worked in the stone yard of the workhouse for a certain ration of food, and threepence per day. He had now come home to dinner quite hungry, as he told us with a melancholy smile, and

his dinner consisted of a couple of slices of bread and dripping, and a cup of milkless tea. . . . The next door at which we knocked was opened by a middle-aged woman, who, without saying a word, led us into a little back parlour, in which sat all her family, silent and fixedly staring at a rapidly dying fire. Such desolation, such hopelessness was about these people and their little room, as I should not care to witness again. 'Nothing have they done, sir,' said the woman, pointing to her boys, 'for six-and-twenty weeks; and all our money gone—all the twenty pounds that me and father saved when times were better, thinking it would yield a little to keep us when we got past work. Look at it,' she said, almost fiercely, bringing out a bank-book with all its well-kept entries of money paid in, and money taken out, so that we could see how the little fortune had begun with the first five shilling deposit, and had grown by little and little to be twenty pounds, and how it had melted down again till the sum in hand got from pounds to shillings, and the last entry made the book as worthless as a blank sheet. This family received relief from the workhouse, and it furnished them with just one scanty meal per day. . . . Our next visit was to an iron labourer's wife, whose husband had worked in the yards. We found her ill from want of food, lying on a mattress in her clothes, and just covered with a strip of carpet, for all the bedding had been pawned. Two wretched children were tending her, themselves looking as much in need of nursing as their mother. Nineteen weeks of enforced idleness had brought them to this pass, and while the mother told the history of that bitter past, she moaned as if all her faith in a future that should atone for it were dead. . . . On getting outside a young fellow came running after us, and asked us to step inside his house and see if anything could be done for him. A young wife, two pretty children, a cluster of pawntickets, and a bare room, were all he had to show."

Concerning the afterpains of the crisis of 1866, I shall next give an extract from a tory newspaper. The reader must bear in mind that the East End of London, to which the extract refers, is not only the district in which the above-mentioned building of iron ships is carried on, but is likewise the seat of what is called "home industry", which is always scandalously underpaid. "A frightful spectacle was to be seen yesterday in one part of the metropolis.

Although the unemployed thousands of the East End did not parade with their black flags en masse, the human torrent was imposing enough. Let us remember what these people suffer. They are dying of hunger. That is the simple and terrible fact. There are 40,000 of them. . . . In our presence, in one quarter of this wonderful metropolis, are packed—next door to the most enormous accumulation of wealth the world ever saw—cheek by jowl with this are 40,000 helpless, starving people. These thousands are now breaking in upon the other quarters, always half-starving, they cry their misery in our ears, they cry to heaven, they tell us from their miserable dwellings, that it is impossible for them to find work, and useless for them to beg. The local ratepayers themselves are driven by the parochial charges to the verge of pauperism.”<sup>1</sup>

Since it is the fashion among English capitalists to describe Belgium as the paradise of the working man, on the ground that in that country the “freedom of labour”, or, what amounts to the same thing, the “freedom of capital”, is not hampered either by the despotism of trade unions or by factory legislation, it will be well here to say a word or two about the “good fortune” of the Belgian worker. Certainly no one can ever have been better acquainted with the mysteries of this good fortune than the late Monsieur Ducpétiaux, inspector-general of Belgian prisons and charitable institutions, and member of the Central Commission for Belgian Statistics. Let us turn to his work, *Budgets économiques des classes ouvrières de la Belgique*, Brussels, 1855. Here, among much other matter of the kind, we find an account of the average working-class family in Belgium, whose yearly expenditure and income has been accurately determined, and whose nutritive conditions have been compared with those of Belgian soldiers, Belgian bluejackets, and Belgian prisoners. The family “consists of father, mother and four children”. Of these six persons “four can find useful employment throughout the whole year”; it is assumed “that among the six there are no invalids and no persons who are not able-bodied”; also “that there are no expenses for religious, moral, or intellectual purposes, except the payment of a very small sum for church sittings”; that there are no “contributions to savings banks or benefit societies”; that there is no expendi-

<sup>1</sup> “Standard”, April 5, 1866.

ture upon "luxuries or superfluities". Still, the father of the family and the eldest son must be allowed to smoke, and to visit the public house on Sundays, so for these indulgences as much as 86 centimes is set aside.—"Striking a general average of the wages paid to the workers in various branches of industry, . . . we find that the highest average of daily wages is 1 fr. 56 c. for men, 89 c. for women, 56 c. for boys, and 55c. for girls. According to this calculation, the maximum income of the family would amount to 1068 frs. per annum. . . . In the household assumed to be typical, we have included all possible sources of income. But if we assign wages to the mother, then we are depriving the household of her guidance; who will take care of the house, and of the younger children? Who will cook, wash, mend? Every worker is daily faced by this dilemma."

The family budget, therefore, is as follows:

Father, 300 working days at frs. 1.56	.. frs. 468
Mother,           "           "       fr. 0.89	..   "   267
Lad,               "           "       " 0.56	..   "   168
Girl,             "           "       " 0.55	..   "   165
	<hr/>
	.. 1068

Now let us suppose that the worker's food is on the scale of a bluejacket, whose food costs per annum frs. 1828; then there would be a deficit of frs. 760. On the soldier's food scale, the cost of which is frs. 1473, there would be a deficit of frs. 405. On the prisoner's food scale, the cost being frs. 1112, there would be a deficit of frs. 44. "We see that labouring families cannot reach, I will not say the average of the sailor or soldier, but even that of the prisoner. During the period 1847 to 1849, the average cost per prisoner in the various prisons of Belgium was 63 centimes. The average cost per head in a Belgian working-class family is 13 centimes less. Although, in the prisons, we have to include in the average cost per prisoner the expenses of administration and warding, prisoners have not to pay for their lodging; furthermore, the purchases they make at the canteens are not included in the expenses of maintenance; and the cost of maintaining prisoners is considerably lowered because their food and other requirements are bought in large quantities wholesale. . . . How is it then, that a

great many, I might even say the majority of workers, can live more economically? This is . . . achieved by adopting expedients, the secret of which is known only to the workers themselves: by going on short commons; by substituting rye bread for wheaten bread; by eating less meat, or even none at all, and the same with butter and condiments; by putting up with one or two rooms, where the family is crowded together, where boys and girls sleep side by side, often on the same pallet; by extreme economy in the matter of clothing, washing, and the like; by dispensing with Sunday amusements; by, in a word, accepting the most painful privations. Once this extreme point is reached, the most trifling rise in the price of food, unemployment, illness, increases the worker's poverty, and utterly ruins him; debts accumulate, credit fails, the most necessary clothes and furniture are pawned, and, at last, the family begs to be enrolled on the list of paupers."<sup>1</sup> In fact, in this "paradise of capitalists" the number of deaths and of crimes is very closely dependent upon trifling rises or falls in the price of the necessities of life!<sup>2</sup> In the whole of Belgium there are 930,000 families, among which, according to official statistics, there are 90,000 families of the well-to-do (electors) comprising 450,000 persons; 190,000 families comprising 1,950,000 persons belonging to the lower middle class in the towns and the villages, many of them on the down grade, and sinking into the proletariat; finally, we have 450,000 working-class families, comprising 2,250,000 persons, among whom the model families described by Ducpétiaux must be accounted fortunate specimens. Of the 450,000 working-class families, more than 200,000 are on the list of paupers!

### E. The British Agricultural Proletariat

The contradictions and antagonisms involved in capitalist production and accumulation are nowhere more blatant than in respect of the progress of English agriculture (cattle breeding included) and the decay of the English agricultural labourer. Before I go on to describe the present condition of these landworkers, let me look back for a moment.

<sup>1</sup> Ducpétiaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 151, 154, and 155.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Manifesto of the "Forward Flemings!" Society. (Maatschappij "De Vlamingen Vooruit!", Brussels, 1860, pp. 15 and 16.

Modern agriculture in England dates from the middle of the eighteenth century, although the revolution in land-holding property relations out of which the change in the methods of agricultural production have arisen is of much earlier date.

Arthur Young, a good observer though a superficial thinker, gives us information concerning the position of the landworker in the year 1771. From this account we see that his position in those days was a miserable one when compared with that of his predecessor at the end of the fourteenth century, "when the labourer . . . could live in plenty and accumulate wealth",<sup>1</sup> not to speak of the fifteenth century, "the golden age of the English labourer in town and country". But we do not need to go back so far. In a very instructive work penned in the year 1777, we read: "The great farmer is nearly mounted to a level with him [the gentleman]; while the poor labourer is depressed almost to the earth. His unfortunate situation will fully appear, by taking a comparative view of it, only forty years ago, and at present. . . . Landlord and tenant . . . have both gone hand-in-hand in keeping the labourer down."<sup>2</sup> The author goes on to give detailed proof that real wages in the country districts fell by approximately 25 % between 1737 and 1777. We also learn from Dr. Richard Price that "modern policy is, indeed, more favourable to the higher classes of people; and the consequences may in time prove that the whole kingdom will consist of only gentry and beggars, or of grandees and slaves".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James E. Thorold Rogers, professor of political economy in the university of Oxford, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, Oxford, 1866, vol. I, p. 690. This work, the fruit of much diligence, deals only, in the two volumes that have hitherto appeared, with the period 1259 to 1400, the second volume consisting exclusively of statistical material. The book is the first authentic history of prices relating to the period in question.

<sup>2</sup> *Reasons for the late Increase of the Poor Rate, or a Comparative View of the Prices of . . . Provisions*, London, 1777, pp. 5 and 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Observations on Reversionary Payments*, sixth edition, London, 1805, vol. II, pp. 158 and 159. On the latter page, Price likewise tells us: "The nominal price of day labour is at present no more than about four times, or at most five times, higher than it was in the year 1514. But the price of corn is seven times and of flesh meat and raiment about fifteen times higher. So far, therefore, has the price of labour been even from advancing in proportion to the increase in the expenses of living, that it does not appear that it bears now half the proportion to those expenses that it did bear."

Nevertheless, the position of the English landworker from 1770 to 1780, whether we consider his diet, his housing conditions, his self-respect, his amusements, or what you will, was one that has never been equalled since then. Reckoned in pints of wheat, his average wages amounted in 1770 to 1771 to 90 pints. In Eden's time, 1777, they had fallen to 65 pints. In 1808, they had fallen lower still, to 60 pints.<sup>1</sup>

The position of the agricultural labourer at the end of the anti-Jacobin war, at a time when that of the landed aristocracy, the farmers, the factory owners, the bankers, the merchants, the stockbrokers, the army contractors, etc., had so greatly improved, has already been indicated. The landworker's nominal wages rose, in part owing to the depreciation in paper money, and in part owing to a rise in prices independent of this currency depreciation. But his real wages can be ascertained in a very simple way, without having recourse to details which upon this matter are untrustworthy. In 1795 and in 1814, the same Poor Law was in force, and there was no change in the methods of its administration. The reader will remember how this law was administered in the country districts. In the form of outdoor relief, the nominal wages of the agricultural labourer were supplemented by the parish, to make them up to the minimum necessary for bare subsistence. The ratio between the wages paid by the farmer and the wage deficit made good by the parish, shows us two things; first, to what amount wages fell below a minimum subsistence; and, secondly, the extent to which the agricultural labourer consisted of wage worker and pauper respectively, or the degree to which he had been transformed into a serf of the parish. Let us select a county which represents the average conditions obtaining in all other counties. In the year 1795, the average weekly wages paid in Northamptonshire amounted to 7s. 6d.; the annual total expenditure of a family of six persons was £36 12s. 5d.; their total income from wages was £29 18s.; the deficit made good by the parish was £6 14s. 5d. In the same county, in the year 1814, the weekly wages were 12s. 2d.; the annual total expenditure of a family of five persons was £54 18s. 4d.; the total income from wages was £36 2s.; the deficit made good by

<sup>1</sup> Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 26.—For the end of the eighteenth century, cf. Eden, *op. cit.*



the parish was £18 6s. 4d.<sup>1</sup> In 1795, the deficit was less than one-fourth of the wages; in 1814 it was more than half. Manifestly, under these conditions, the trifling degree of comfort which in Eden's day was still to be found in the agricultural labourer's cottage must have vanished by 1814.<sup>2</sup> Of all the animals kept by the farmer, the labourer, the one endowed with the gift of speech, was, thenceforward, the most oppressed, the worst fed, the most brutally treated.

This condition of affairs lasted unchanged until "the Swing riots in 1830 revealed to us" [the ruling classes], "by the light of blazing corn stacks, that misery and black mutinous discontent smouldered quite as fiercely under the surface of agricultural as of manufacturing England".<sup>3</sup>

It was at this time that, in the Lower House, Sadler first spoke of the agricultural labourers as "white slaves", and one of the bishops echoed the epithet in the House of Lords. The most notable political economist of that period, E. G. Wakefield, says: "The peasant of the south of England . . . is not a freeman, nor is he a slave; he is a pauper."<sup>4</sup>

The period immediately before the repeal of the Corn Laws threw a new light upon the position of the agricultural labourer. On the one hand, it was to the advantage of bourgeois agitators to show how little the Corn Laws protected the actual producers of corn. On the other hand, the industrial bourgeoisie was greatly incensed because of the way in which members of the landed aristocracy were denouncing the factory system; and because of the sympathy which these utterly corrupt, heartless, and genteel loafers affected to feel for the woes of factory operatives. The advocacy of factory legislation by the landed interest was regarded by the industrial interest as the outcome of "diplomatic zeal". There is an English proverb to the effect that when thieves fall out, honest men come by their own. In actual fact, the clamorous and passionate dispute between the two sections of the ruling class as to which of them was exploiting the workers most shamefully, helped, on either side, to bring the truth to light. Lord Shaftesbury, at that time Lord Ashley, was commander-in-chief in the aristocratic campaign against the factory owners. In 1845,

<sup>1</sup> Parry, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> S. Laing, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *England and America*, London, 1833, vol. I, p. 47.

## AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' WAGES.

(a) Children.	(b) Number of Members in Family.	(c) Weekly Wage of the Men.	(d) Weekly Wage of the Children.	(e) Weekly In- come of the Whole Family.	(f) Weekly Rent.	(g) Total Weekly Wage after Deduction of Rent.	(h) Weekly Income per Head.
FIRST VILLAGE.							
2	4	s. d. 8 0	s. d. —	s. d. 8 0	s. d. 2 0	s. d. 6 0	s. d. 1 6
3	5	8 0	—	8 0	1 0	6 6	1 3½
2	4	8 0	—	8 0	1 0	7 0	1 9
2	4	8 0	—	8 0	1 0	7 0	1 9
6	8	7 0	1 0	10 6	2 0	8 6	1 0½
3	5	7 0	1 0	7 0	1 4	5 8	1 1½
SECOND VILLAGE.							
6	8	7 0	1 0	10 0	1 6	8 6	1 0½
6	8	7 0	1 0	10 0	1 6	8 6	1 0½
4	10	7 0	—	7 0	1 3½	5 8½	0 8½
3	6	7 0	—	7 0	1 3½	5 8½	0 8½
3	5	7 0	—	7 0	1 6½	5 5½	0 11
THIRD VILLAGE.							
4	6	7 0	1 0	7 0	1 0	6 0	1 0
3	5	7 0	1 0	11 6	0 10	10 8	2 1½
0	2	5 0	2 6	5 0	1 0	4 0	2 0½

: "Economist," March 29, 1845, p. 290.

therefore, this nobleman was a favourite topic in the revelations of the "Morning Chronicle" concerning the condition of the agricultural labourer. This newspaper, then the most important liberal organ, sent special commissioners into the rural districts. These emissaries were not content with general descriptions or with the publication of statistics, but gave the actual names, not only in the case of the working-class families whose circumstances they studied, but also of the landowners concerned. The following list gives the wages paid in three Dorset villages in the neighbourhood of Blandford, Wimborne, and Poole. The villages in question are the property of Mr. G. Banks and Lord Shaftesbury, respectively. It will be noted that Lord Shaftesbury, the Low Church pope, the leader of the English pietists, follows Banks' example in pocketing a large proportion of the labourer's miserable wages in the form of house-rent. (See Table on page 748.)

The repeal of the Corn Laws gave a tremendous impetus to English agriculture. Drainage on the most extensive scale,<sup>1</sup> a new system of stall-feeding and of the artificial cultivation of green crops, the introduction of apparatus for mechanical manuring, a new treatment of clay soils, an increased use of mineral manures, the utilisation of the steam-engine and all kinds of new machinery, more intensive cultivation generally—such were the characteristics of this epoch. Mr. Pusey, chairman of the Royal Agricultural Society, declares that the "relative" expenses of farming have been reduced by nearly half, owing to the introduction of new machinery. On the other hand, the positive yield of the soil was quickly enhanced. An essential condition of the new method was a greater capital expenditure per acre, this involving an acceleration in the concentration of farms.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To promote the drainage of the land, the landed aristocracy advanced itself funds from the State treasury at a very low rate of interest, funds which the farmers have to make good at double the figure. Of course this operation was effected in due parliamentary form.

<sup>2</sup> The falling-off in the number of medium-scale farmers is disclosed by the following entries in the census: "farmer's son, grandson, brother, nephew, daughter, granddaughter, sister, niece"; in a word, the members of his own family employed by the farmer. In 1851, there were in this category 216,851 persons; in 1861, only 176,151. From 1851 to 1871, the farms under 20 acres were reduced in number by more than 900; those between 50 and 75 acres were reduced in number from 8253 to 6370; a similar reduction in the case

At the same time, the area of land under cultivation increased by 464,119 acres between 1846 and 1856, not to mention the great region in the eastern counties which was transformed from rabbit warrens and poor pastures into fertile corn land. The reader already knows that during this same epoch the total number of persons employed in agriculture fell off. As regards the actual landworkers of both sexes and all ages, their number fell from 1,241,269 in the year 1851 to 1,163,217 in the year 1861.<sup>1</sup> The English registrar general rightly remarks in this connexion: "The increase of farmers and farm labourers since 1801, bears no kind of proportion . . . to the increase of agricultural produce."<sup>2</sup> The disproportion is, however, far more marked in the most recent period, when a positive decline in the number of agricultural labourers has gone hand-in-hand with an extension in the area under cultivation, with the spread of intensive culture, with an unprecedented accumulation of the capital devoted to landed enterprise, with an unparalleled increase in the produce of the soil, with an immense expansion in the rent-rolls of the landed proprietors and in the wealth of the capitalist farmers. Taking all this in conjunction with the uninterrupted and rapid expansion of town markets and with the dominion of free trade, we might think that the agricultural labourer ought, at long last, to have been placed in circumstances that should have made him drunk with happiness.

But Professor Rogers comes to the conclusion that the English agricultural labourer of to-day, when compared, not with his predecessor in the latter half of the fourteenth century and in the fifteenth century, but only with his predecessor of 1770 to 1780, is in a very much worse position; that "the peasant has again become a serf", and a serf who is worse fed and worse clothed.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Julian Hunter, in his epoch-making report on the dwellings on the agricultural

of all other farms under 100 acres. Conversely, during the same twenty years, the number of large farms increased. Those ranging from 300 to 500 acres rose from 7771 to 8410; those of more than 500 acres, from 2755 to 3914; those of more than 1000 acres, from 492 to 582.

<sup>1</sup> The number of shepherds increased from 12,517 to 25,559.

<sup>2</sup> *Census*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 693, and p. 10. Mr. Rogers belongs to the liberal school, is a personal friend of Cobden and Bright, and is therefore not likely to be "an adulator of past days".

labourers, says: "The cost of the hind<sup>1</sup> is fixed at the lowest possible amount on which he can live. . . . The supplies of wages and shelter are not calculated on the profit to be derived from him. He is a zero in farming calculations.<sup>2</sup> The means [of subsistence] being always supposed to be a fixed quantity. . . . As to any further reduction of his income he may say: 'Nihil habeo nihil curo'.<sup>3</sup> He has no fears for the future, because he has now only the spare supply necessary to keep him. He has reached the zero from which are dated the calculations of the farmer. Come what will, he has no share either in prosperity or adversity."<sup>4</sup>

In the year 1863, there was an official enquiry into the conditions of diet and labour of the criminals serving under sentences of transportation and penal servitude. The results have been incorporated in two fat Blue Books. Here, among other things, we read: "From an elaborate comparison between the diet of convicts in the convict prisons in England and that of paupers in workhouses and of free labourers in the same country, . . . it certainly appears that the former are much better fed than either of the two other classes";<sup>5</sup> whilst "the amount of labour required from an ordinary convict under penal servitude is about one-half of what would be done by an ordinary day labourer."<sup>6</sup> Here are some characteristic items of evidence. John Smith, governor of Edinburgh Prison, deposes (n. 5056): "The diet of the English prisons [is] superior to that of ordinary labourers in England." (N. 50): "It is the fact . . . that the ordinary agricultural labourers in Scotland very seldom get any meat at all." (N. 3047): "Is there anything that you are aware of to account for the necessity of feeding them very much better than ordinary labourers?"—"Certainly not." (N. 3048): "Do you think that further experiments

<sup>1</sup> A name for the agricultural labourer, inherited from the days of serfdom.

<sup>2</sup> *Public Health, Seventh Report*, 1865, p. 242.—It is, therefore, by no means uncommon for the owner of the labourer's cottage to raise the rent as soon as he hears that the tenant is earning a little more money; or for a farmer to reduce one of his labourer's wages because he is informed that the man's wife has got work.

<sup>3</sup> I have nothing, I care nothing; i.e., since I have nothing, I cannot lose.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 134 and 135.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Commissioners . . . relating to Transportation and Penal Servitude*, London, 1863, pp. 42 and 50.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77. *Memorandum by the Lord Chief Justice.*

ought to be made in order to ascertain whether a dietary might not be hit upon for prisoners employed on public works nearly approaching to the dietary of free labourers?"<sup>1</sup> —"He [the agricultural labourer] might say: 'I work hard, and have not enough to eat, and when in prison I did not work harder where I had plenty to eat, and therefore it is better for me to be in prison again than here'."<sup>2</sup> From the tables appended to the first volume of the report, I have compiled the subjoined comparative summary:

## WEEKLY AMOUNT OF NUTRIMENT.

	Quantity of Nitro- genous Ingredients.	Quantity of Non-Nitro- genous Ingredients.	Quantity of Mineral Matter.	Total.
	Ounces.	Ounces.	Ounces.	Ounces.
Portland (Convict) ..	28.95	150.06	4.68	183.69
Sailor in the Navy ..	29.63	152.91	4.52	187.06
Soldier .. ..	25.55	114.49	3.94	143.98
Working Coachmaker	24.53	162.06	4.23	190.82
Compositor .. ..	21.24	100.83	3.12	125.19
Agricultural Labourer	17.73	118.06	3.29	139.08 <sup>3</sup>

The reader has already been made acquainted with the general result of the Privy Council's enquiry of 1863 concerning the food of the worst fed classes. (See above, page 724 et seq.) He will remember that the diet of a large proportion of agricultural labourers' families falls below the minimum requisite "to arrest starvation diseases". This is especially the case in the purely agricultural districts of Cornwall, Devon, Somersetshire, Wilts, Stafford, Oxford, Berks, and Herts. According to Dr. Simon: "The nourishment obtained by the labourer himself is larger than the average quantity indicates, since he eats a larger share, . . . necessary to enable him to perform his labour, . . . of food than the other members of the family, including in the poorer districts nearly all the meat and bacon. . . . The quantity of food obtained by the wife and also by the children at the period of rapid growth is, in many cases,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol II, *Minutes of Evidence*.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, Appendix, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 274-275.

in almost every county deficient, and particularly in nitrogen.”<sup>1</sup> The farm servants, the men and women who live in (boarding with the farmers), are sufficiently well-nourished. Their number, which in 1851 was 288,277, fell in 1861 to 204,962. According to Dr. Smith: “The labour of women in the fields, whatever may be its disadvantages, . . . is under present circumstances of great advantage to the family, since it adds that amount of income which . . . provides shoes and clothing and pays the rent, and thus enables the family to be better fed.”<sup>2</sup> One of the most remarkable results of this enquiry was to show that the agricultural labourer of England, as compared with other parts of the United Kingdom, “is considerably the worst fed”, as the appended table indicates:

QUANTITIES OF CARBON AND NITROGEN WEEKLY  
CONSUMED BY AN AVERAGE ADULT AGRICULTURAL  
LABOURER.

	Carbon.		Nitrogen.	
	Grains.		Grains.	
England .. ..	47	673	1	594
Wales .. ..	48	354	2	031
Scotland .. ..	48	980	2	348
Ireland .. ..	43	366	2	433 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Public Health, Sixth Report*, London, 1864, pp. 238, 249, 261, and 262.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 17.—The English agricultural labourer gets only a quarter as much milk and only half as much bread as the Irish. Arthur Young in his *Tour through Ireland*, made at the beginning of the present century, noticed how much better nourished the Irish labourer was than the English. The simple reason is that the poor Irish farmer is a much more humane man than the well-to-do English farmer. Passing now to the south-western counties of Wales, we find that all the doctors in that part of the world agree that the increase in the death-rate from tuberculosis, scrofula, etc., becomes intensified concomitantly with the deterioration in the physical condition of the population; and that they are unanimous in ascribing this deterioration to poverty. The farm labourer's “keep is reckoned at about five pence a day, but in many districts it was said to be of much less cost to the farmer”, [himself very poor]. . . . “A morsel of the salt meat or bacon, . . . salted and dried to the texture of mahogany, and hardly worth the difficult process of

Commenting on Dr. Hunter's report, Dr. Simon writes: "To the insufficient quantity and miserable quality of the house accommodation generally had by our agricultural labourers, almost every page of Dr. Hunter's report bears testimony. And gradually, for many years past, the state of the labourer in these respects has been deteriorating, house-room being now greatly more difficult for him to

assimilation . . . is used to flavour a large quantity of broth or gruel, of meal and leeks, and day after day this is the labourer's dinner." The advance of industry resulted for him, in this harsh and damp climate, in "the abandonment of the solid home-spun clothing in favour of the cheap and so-called cotton goods", and of stronger drinks for so-called tea. "The agriculturist, after several hours' exposure to wind and rain, gains his cottage to sit by a fire of peat or of balls of clay and small coal kneaded together, from which volumes of carbonic and sulphurous acids are poured forth. His walls are of mud and stones, his floor the bare earth which was there before the hut was built, his roof a mass of loose and sodden thatch. Every crevice is stopped to maintain warmth, and in an atmosphere of diabolic odour, with a mud floor, with his only clothes drying on his back, he often sups and sleeps with his wife and children. Obstetricians who have passed parts of the night in such cabins have described how they found their feet sinking in the mud of the floor, and they were forced (easy task) to drill a hole through the wall to effect a little private respiration. It was attested by numerous witnesses in various grades of life, that to these insanitary influences, and many more, the underfed peasant was nightly exposed, and of the result, a debilitated and scrofulous people, there was no want of evidence. . . . The statements of the relieving officers of Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire show in a striking way the same state of things." There is besides "a plague more horrible still, the great number of idiots". Now a word on the climatic conditions. "A strong south-west wind blows over the whole country for eight or nine months in the year, bringing with it torrents of rain, which discharge principally upon the western slopes of the hills. Trees are rare, except in sheltered places, and where not protected, are blown out of all shape. The cottages generally crouch under some bank, or often in a ravine or quarry, and none but the smallest sheep and native cattle can live on the pastures. . . . The young people migrate to the eastern mining districts of Glamorgan and Monmouth. Carmarthenshire is the breeding ground of the mining population, and their hospital. The population can therefore barely maintain its numbers." Thus in Cardiganshire:

				185x.	186x.
Males	..	..	..	45,155	44,446
Females	..	..	..	52,459	52,955
				<u>97,614</u>	<u>97,401</u>

Dr. Hunter, in *Public Health, Seventh Report*, 1864, London, 1865, pp. 498-502 passim.



find, and, when found, greatly less suitable to his needs than, perhaps, for centuries had been the case. Especially within the last twenty or thirty years, the evil has been in very rapid increase, and the household circumstances of the labourer are now in the highest degree deplorable. Except in so far as they whom his labour enriches, see fit to treat him with a kind of pitiful indulgence, he is quite peculiarly helpless in the matter. Whether he shall find house-room on the land which he contributes to till, whether the house-room which he gets shall be human or swinish, whether he shall have the little space of garden that so vastly lessens the pressure of his poverty—all this does not depend on his willingness and ability to pay reasonable rent for the decent accommodation he requires, but depends on the use which others may see fit to make of their 'right to do as they will with their own'. However large may be a farm, there is no law that a certain proportion of labourers' dwellings (much less of decent dwellings) shall be upon it; nor does any law reserve for the labourer ever so little right in that soil to which his industry is as needful as sun and rain. . . . An extraneous element weighs the balance heavily against him, . . . the influence of the Poor Law in its provisions concerning settlement and chargeability.<sup>1</sup> Under this influence, each parish has a pecuniary interest in reducing to a minimum the number of its resident labourers:—for, unhappily, agricultural labour instead of implying a safe and permanent independence for the hard-working labourer and his family, implies for the most part only a longer or shorter circuit to eventual pauperism—a pauperism which, during the whole circuit, is so near, that any illness or temporary failure of occupation necessitates immediate recourse to parochial relief—and thus all residence of agricultural population in a parish is glaringly an addition to its poor rates. . . . Large proprietors<sup>2</sup> . . . have but to resolve that there shall be no labourers' dwellings on their estates, and their estates will thenceforth be

<sup>1</sup> In 1865, the law was improved to some extent, but experience will soon show that tinkering of this sort is of no avail whatever.

<sup>2</sup> In order to understand what follows, the reader must bear in mind that villages are classified as of two kinds: first, "close villages", those in which the land is all owned by one or two great landlords; and, secondly, "open villages", in which the land is owned by a number of smaller landlords. It is in the "open villages", that speculative builders can erect cottages and lodging houses.

virtually free from half their responsibility for the poor. How far it has been intended, in the English constitution and law, that this kind of unconditional property in land should be acquirable, and that a landlord, 'doing as he wills with his own', should be able to treat the cultivators of the soil as aliens, whom he may expel from his territory, is a question which I do not pretend to discuss. . . . For that [power] of eviction . . . does not exist only in theory. On a very large scale it prevails in practice—prevails . . . as a main governing condition in the household circumstances of agricultural labour. . . . As regards the extent of the evil, it may suffice to refer to the evidence which Dr. Hunter has compiled from the last census, that destruction of houses, notwithstanding increased local demands for them, had, during the last ten years, been in progress in 821 separate parishes or townships of England, so that irrespectively of persons who had been forced to become non-resident (that is in the parishes in which they work), these parishes and townships were receiving in 1861, as compared with 1851, a population  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent greater, into house-room  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent less. . . . When the process of depopulation has completed itself, the result, says Dr. Hunter, is a show-village where the cottages have been reduced to a few, and where none but persons who are needed as shepherds, gardeners, or gamekeepers, are allowed to live; regular servants who receive the good treatment usual to their class.<sup>1</sup> But the land requires cultivation, and it will be found that the labourers employed upon it are not the tenants of the owner, but that they come from a neighbouring open village, perhaps three miles off, where a numerous small proprietary had received them when their cottages were destroyed in the close villages around. Where things are tending to the above result, often the cottages which stand, testify, in their unrepai red and wretched

<sup>1</sup> Such a model village looks very pretty, but it is as unreal as were the villages which Catherine II saw on her journey to the Crimea ["Potemkin villages"]. In recent times, moreover, shepherds have often been banished from such show villages. For instance, near Market Harborough there is a sheep-farm of about 500 acres, employing only one shepherd. This shepherd, that he might be saved long trudges over the wide plains, the beautiful pastures of Leicester and Northampton, used to be provided with a cottage on the farm. Now he is given an extra shilling a week, 13s. a week in all, that he may find a lodging far away in an open village.

condition, to the extinction to which they are doomed. They are seen standing in the various stages of natural decay. While the shelter holds together, the labourer is permitted to rent it, and glad enough he will often be to do so, even at the price of decent lodging. But no repair, no improvement, shall it receive, except such as its penniless occupants can supply. And when at last it becomes quite uninhabitable—uninhabitable even to the humblest standard of serfdom—it will be but one more destroyed cottage, and future poor-rates will be somewhat lightened. While great owners are thus escaping from poor-rates through the depopulation of lands over which they have control, the nearest town or open village receives the evicted labourers: the nearest, I say, but this 'nearest' may mean three or four miles distant from the farm where the labourer has his daily toil. To that daily toil there will then have to be added, as though it were nothing, the daily need of walking six or eight miles for power of earning his bread. And whatever farmwork is done by his wife and children, is done at the same disadvantage. Nor is this nearly all the toil which the distance occasions him. In the open village, cottage speculators buy scraps of land, which they throng as densely as they can with the cheapest of all possible hovels. And into those wretched habitations (which, even if they adjoin the open country, have some of the worst features of the worst town residences) crowd the agricultural labourers of England.<sup>1</sup> . . . Nor on the other hand must

<sup>1</sup> "The labourers' houses (in the open villages, which, of course, are always overcrowded) are usually in rows, built with their backs against the extreme edge of the plot of land which the builder could call his, and on this account are not allowed light and air except from the front." *Dr. Hunter's Report*, p. 135.—Very often the village publican or the village grocer owns such cottages. In that case, the agricultural labourer finds in this worthy a second master, over and above the farmer, for the tenant must be customer as well. "The hind with his 10s. a week, minus a rent of £4 a year . . . is obliged to buy, at the seller's own terms, his modicum of tea, sugar, flour, soap, candles, and beer." *Ibid.*, p. 132.—In fact, these open villages form the "penal settlements" of the English agricultural proletariat. Many of the cottages are merely lodging houses, through which all the rabble of the neighbourhood passes. In such circumstances, the countryman and his family (who have often shown a wonderful power of retaining efficiency and excellence of character, in the most abominable conditions) simply go to the devil. Of course among the aristocratic Shylocks it is the fashion to shrug shoulders pharisaically at the doings of the speculative builders and the small

it be supposed that even when the labourer is housed upon the lands which he cultivates, his household circumstances are generally such as his life of productive industry would seem to deserve. Even on princely estates, . . . his cottage . . . may be of the meanest description. There are landlords who deem any style good enough for their labourer and his family, and who yet do not disdain to drive with him the hardest possible bargain for rent.<sup>1</sup> It may be but a ruinous one-bedroomed hut, having no fire-grate, no privy, no opening window, no water supply but the ditch, no garden—but the labourer is helpless against the wrong. . . . And the Nuisances Removal Acts . . . are . . . a mere dead letter, . . . in great part dependent for their working on such cottage owners as the one from whom his [the labourer's] hovel is rented. . . . From brighter, but exceptional scenes, it is requisite, in the interests of justice, that attention should again be drawn to the overwhelming preponderance of facts which are a reproach to the civilisation of England. Lamentable indeed, must be the case, when, notwithstanding all that is evident with regard to the quality of the present accommodation, it is the common conclusion of competent observers that even the general badness of dwellings is an evil infinitely less urgent than their mere numerical insufficiency. For years the over-

landlords, to turn up noses at all that goes on in the open villages. Yet they know well enough that their "close villages" and "show villages" are the birthplaces of the "open villages", and that the one could not exist without the other. "The labourers, . . . were it not for the small owners, would, for by far the most part, have to sleep under the trees of the farms, on which they work." *Ibid.*, p. 135.—The system of "open" and "closed" villages obtains throughout the midland counties, and over all the eastern part of England.

<sup>1</sup> "The employer . . . is . . . directly or indirectly securing to himself the profit on a man employed at 10s. a week, and receiving from this poor hind £4 or £5 annual rent for houses not worth £20 in a really free market, but maintained at their artificial value by the power of the owner to say 'Use my house, or go seek a hiring elsewhere, without a character from me'. . . . Does a man wish to better himself, to go as a platelayer on the railway, or to begin quarry work, the same power is ready with 'Work for me at this low rate of wages, or begone at a week's notice; take your pig with you, and get what you can for the potatoes growing in your garden'. Should his interest appear to be better served by it, an enhanced rent is sometimes preferred in these cases by the owner (i.e. the farmer) as the penalty for leaving his service." *Dr. Hunter's Report*, p. 132.

crowding of rural labourers' dwellings has been a matter of deep concern, not only to persons who care for sanitary good, but to persons who care for decent and moral life. For again and again, in phrases so uniform that they seem stereotyped, reporters on the spread of epidemic disease in rural districts, have insisted on the extreme importance of that overcrowding, as an influence which renders it a quite hopeless task to attempt the limiting of any infection which is introduced. And again and again it has been pointed out that, notwithstanding the many salubrious influences which there are in country life, the crowding which so favours the extension of contagious disease, also favours the origination of disease which is not contagious. And those who have denounced the overcrowded state of our rural population have not been silent as to a further mischief. Even where their primary concern has been only with the injury to health, often almost perforce they have referred to other relations on the subject. In showing how frequently it happens that adult persons of both sexes, married and unmarried, are huddled together in single small sleeping rooms, their reports have carried the conviction that, under the circumstances they describe, decency must always be outraged, and morality almost of necessity must suffer.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for instance, in the appendix of my last annual report, Dr. Ord, reporting on an outbreak of fever at Wing, in Buckinghamshire, mentions how a young man who had come thither from Wingrave with fever, 'in the first days of his illness slept in a room with nine other persons. Within a fortnight several of these persons were attacked, and in the course of a few weeks five out of the nine had fever, and one died'. . . . From Dr. Harvey, of St. George's Hospital, who, on private professional business, visited

<sup>1</sup> "New married couples are no edifying study for grown-up brothers and sisters; and, though instances must not be recorded, sufficient data are remembered to warrant the remark, that great depression and sometimes death are the lot of the female participators in the offence of incest." *Dr. Hunter's Report*, p. 137.—A country policeman who had at one time, and for many years, been a detective in the worst quarters of London says of the girls in his village: "Their boldness and shamelessness I never saw equalled during some years of police life and detective duty in the worst parts of London. . . . They live like pigs, great boys and girls, mothers and fathers, all sleeping in one room, in many instances." *Children's Employment Commission, Sixth Report*, 1867, pp. 77 et seq., and p. 155.

Wing during the time of the epidemic. I received information exactly in the sense of the above report. . . . 'A young woman having fever, lay at night in a room occupied by her father and mother, her bastard child, two young men (her brothers), and her two sisters, each with a bastard child—10 persons in all. A few weeks ago, 13 persons slept in it.' ”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Hunter examined 5375 labourers' cottages, not only in the purely agricultural districts, but in all the counties of England. Of these 5375, in 2195 there was only one bedroom (which was often the living room as well); in 2930 there were only two bedrooms; and in 250 there were more than two. Let me cull nosegays in a dozen counties.

### (1) BEDFORDSHIRE.

*Wrestlingworth.* Bedrooms about 12 ft. long and 10 ft. wide, although many are much smaller. The tiny, one-storeyed cottage is often partitioned by boards into two bedrooms, one bed frequently in a kitchen, 5 feet 6 inches high. Rent, £3 a year. The tenants have to make their own privies, the landlord merely supplying a hole in the ground. If any one builds a privy, it is used by the whole neighbourhood. One house, tenanted by a family named Richardson, could hardly be bettered. "Its plaster walls bulged very like a lady's dress in a curtsey. One gable end was convex, the other concave, and on this last, unfortunately, stood the chimney, a curved tube of clay and wood like an elephant's trunk. A long stick served as prop to prevent the chimney from falling. The doorway and window were rhomboidal." Of 17 houses visited, only 4 had more than one bedroom, and those 4 were overcrowded. The cottages with one bedroom had to accommodate three adults and three children, a married couple with six children, and so on.

*Dunton.* The rents were higher than usual, ranging from £4 to £5. The men's weekly wages were 10s. They hope that straw-plaiting done by members of the family will enable them to pay the rent. The higher the rent, the larger the number that must join in such home work in order to pay it. Six adults, herding with four children in one bedroom, pay for this accommodation £3 10s. The cheapest house in Dunton, its outside measurements being 15 feet by 10 feet, is rented at £3. Only one of the 14 houses examined had

<sup>1</sup> *Public Health, Seventh Report, 1864, pp. 9 and 14, passim.*

2 bedrooms. A little outside the village was a house whose "tenants dinged against the house-side"; the lower 5 inches of the door were eaten away through sheer rottenness; this aperture was ingeniously covered at night-time by propping from within a few brickbats covered with matting. Half a window, with glass and frame, had gone the way of all flesh. Here there were huddled together three adults and five children; they had no furniture. Dunton is no worse than the rest of Biggleswade Union.

## (2) BERKSHIRE.

*Beenham.* In June 1864, a man, a woman, and four children were living here in a one-storeyed cottage. A daughter, coming home from domestic service, had scarlet fever. She died. One of the children fell sick and died. The mother and another child were suffering from typhus when Dr. Hunter was sent for. The father and another child were sleeping elsewhere, but the difficulty of securing isolation was obvious, for in the crowded market-place of the poverty-stricken village was lying the underclothing from the infected household, waiting for the wash.—H. pays 1s. a week for his cottage; it contains one bedroom for himself, his wife, and six children.—Another house, 14 feet 6 inches by 7 feet, with a kitchen 6 feet high, was let for 8d. a week; the bedroom had neither window, fireplace, door, nor any opening except one into the lobby; there was no garden. Till recently, in this cottage, a man with two grown-up daughters and a son nearing manhood lived together; the father and the son slept in the bed, the girls in the passage. Each of the girls had given birth to a child while the family was living here, but one had gone to the workhouse for her confinement and then came home.

## (3) BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

In one place there were 30 cottages on 1000 acres of land, and the population was from 130 to 140 persons.

*Bradenham.* This comprises 1000 acres; in 1851, there were 36 houses, inhabited by 84 males and 54 females. In 1861, the inequality between the sexes was less marked, for there were then 98 males and 87 females, the increase in ten years being 14 men and 33 women. Meanwhile, the number of houses was one less than before.

*Winslow.* A great part of this village is newly built in a good style. The demand for houses is considerable, for very poor cottages are let at from 1s. to 1s. 3d. per week.

*Water Eaton.* Here, in face of an increase in population, the houseowners have destroyed about 20 % of the cottages. A poor labourer who had to walk about 4 miles to work was asked whether he could not find a cottage nearer. He answered: "No; they know better than to take a man in with my large family."

*Tinker's End,* near Winslow. A bedroom 11 feet long, 9 feet broad, 6 feet 5 inches high at the highest part, provided sleeping accommodation for 4 adults and 4 children. Another bedroom, 11 feet 3 inches long by 9 feet broad and 5 feet 10 inches high, sheltered 6 persons. Each of these families had less cubic airspace than is considered necessary for a convict. No house had more than one bedroom; not one of them a back door; water very scarce; weekly rent from 1s. 4d. to 2s. In the 16 houses that were visited, there was only one man who earned as much as 10s. a week. The cubic airspace per person in the circumstances just described is equivalent to that which he would have if shut up for the night in a box measuring 4 feet each way. But, of course, these rickety old cottages provide for a considerable amount of accidental ventilation.

#### (4) CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

*Gamblingay.* This place belongs to several landlords. It contains the worst cottages to be found anywhere. There is much straw-plaiting work here. "A deadly lassitude, a hopeless surrendering up to filth," reigns in Gamblingay. If the centre be neglected, the extremities, the north and the south, where the houses are falling to pieces, are even worse. The absentee landlords drain the lifeblood from the place. The rents are very high; from 8 to 9 persons are crammed into one bedroom; in two instances, there are 6 adults and one or two children in a tiny bedroom.

#### (5) ESSEX.

In many of the parishes in this county, a decline in population has gone hand-in-hand with the decay of the cottages. But in no less than 22 parishes, the destruction of the houses has not checked the increase in population,



and has not brought about the expulsion of the inhabitants which passes by the name of migration to the towns. In *Fingringhoe*, a parish of 3443 acres, there were in 1851 as many as 145 houses, whereas in 1861, the number had fallen to 110; but the inhabitants would not clear out, and even under such conditions their numbers were increasing. In 1851 there were at *Ramsden Crags* 252 persons living in 61 cottages; but in 1861 there were 262 persons crammed into only 49 cottages. In *Basilden*, a parish of 1827 acres, the population in 1851 consisted of 157 persons living in 35 cottages; a decade later, there were 180 persons in 27 cottages. In the parishes of *Fingringhoe*, *South Farnbridge*, *Widford*, *Basilden*, and *Ramsden Crags*, comprising in all 8449 acres, there were in 1851, living in 316 houses, 1392 persons; and in 1861, living in 249 houses, there were 1473 persons.

#### (6) HEREFORDSHIRE.

This little county has suffered more from the eviction mania than any other in England. At *Nadby*, the overcrowded cottages, containing for the most part two bedrooms each, are mainly owned by the farmers. These charge a rent of £3 or £4 a year, while paying their labourers a wage of 9s.!

#### (7) HUNTINGDONSHIRE.

*Hartford*. Here, in 1851, there were 87 houses. Not long afterwards, in this little parish of 1720 acres, 19 cottages were destroyed. The population in 1831 was 452; in 1852, it was 832; and in 1861, it was 341. Fourteen cottages, all containing one bedroom only each, were examined. In one of these there was a married couple, with 3 grown-up sons, 1 grown-up daughter, and 4 young children, 10 persons in all. In another, 3 adults and 6 children. One of these rooms, in which 8 persons had to sleep, measured 12 feet 10 inches by 12 feet 2 inches, and was 6 feet 9 inches high; this gives a cubic space (without making any deductions for projections into the apartment) of about 130 cubic feet per head. The total of 14 bedrooms provides sleeping accommodation for 34 adults and 33 children. These cottages rarely have gardens, but many of the tenants can rent plots of land at 10s. or 12s. per rood. The allotments are at a considerable distance from the houses, which latter are without privies.

The family "must either go to the allotment to deposit their ordures", or as happens in this place, saving your presence, "use a closet with a trough set like a drawer in a chest-of-drawers and drawn out weekly and conveyed to the allotment to be emptied where its contents were wanted". In Japan, the circulation of the necessities of life is carried on in a more cleanly fashion than this.

### (8) LINCOLNSHIRE.

*Langtoft.* Here we find a man living with his wife, her mother, and 5 children, in a house with a front kitchen, a scullery, and a bedroom over the front kitchen. The measurements of the front kitchen and of the bedroom are 12 feet 2 inches by 9 feet 5 inches; the whole ground floor measures 21 feet 2 inches by 9 feet 5 inches. The bedroom is a garret; the walls lean towards one another as they run up into the roof, giving the room a shape like that of a sugar loaf. There is a trap-window opening in front. "Why did he live here? On account of the garden? No; it is very small. Rent? High, 1s. 3d. per week. Near his work? No; 6 miles away, so that he walks daily, to and fro, 12 miles. He lived there because it was a tenantable cot", and because he wanted to have a cottage of his own, anywhere, at any price, and in any condition.

The following table relates to 12 houses in Langtoft containing 12 bedrooms, where 38 adults and 36 children are quartered.

*Twelve Houses in Langtoft.*

Houses.				Bedrooms.	Adults.	Children.	Number of Persons.
No.	1	..	..	1	3	5	8
"	2	..	..	1	4	3	7
"	3	..	..	1	4	4	8
"	4	..	..	1	5	4	9
"	5	..	..	1	2	2	4
"	6	..	..	1	5	3	8
"	7	..	..	1	3	3	6
"	8	..	..	1	3	2	5
"	9	..	..	1	2	0	2
"	10	..	..	1	2	3	5
"	11	..	..	1	3	3	6
"	12	..	.	1	2	4	6

## (9) KENT.

*Kennington.* In 1859, when diphtheria broke out, this place was terribly overcrowded. The parish doctor made an official enquiry into the condition of the poorer classes. He found that, though there was a great demand for labour, a number of cottages had been destroyed and no new ones built. In one district there were 4 houses, called "bird-cages"; each had 4 rooms, of the following dimensions:

Kitchen: 9 ft. 5 by 8 ft. 11 by 6 ft. 6.

Scullery: 8 ft. 6 by 4 ft. 6 by 6 ft. 6.

Bedroom: 8 ft. 5 by 5 ft. 10 by 6 ft. 3.

Bedroom: 8 ft. 3 by 8 ft. 4 by 6 ft. 3.

## (10) NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

*Brinworth, Pickford, and Floore.* When these villages were visited in the winter, from 20 to 30 men were lounging about the streets, unemployed. The arable has not been sufficiently planted with wheat and root-crops, and the landlord has found it convenient to join a number of small farms into two or three large ones; hence the lack of employment. While the land is clamouring for labour, the unemployed labourers look at it hungrily. They are grossly overworked in summer, and half starved in winter, so it is no wonder that, in their own dialect, they should say: "The parson and gentlefolk seem frit to death at we." At *Floore*, we find married couples with 4 or 5 or 6 children quartered in one bedroom for the family; in another case, 3 adults with 5 children; in another, a couple with a grandfather and 6 children, down with scarlet fever; in two houses with two bedrooms each, a family of 8 adults in one case and of 9 adults in another.

## (11) WILTSHIRE.

*Stratton.* The number of houses visited was 31. In eight there was only one bedroom. At *Pentill*, in the same parish, a cottage, rented at 1s. 3d., and housing 4 adults and 4 children, had outer walls good, but nothing else good about it, from the floor of rough-hewn flags to the roof of worn-out thatch.

## (12) WORCESTERSHIRE.

In this county, the destruction of houses has not gone quite so far. Still, between 1851 and 1861, the average number of inhabitants per house rose from 4·2 to 4·6.

*Badsey.* Here there are many cottages and little gardens. Some of the farmers declare that the cottages are "a great nuisance here, because they bring the poor." According to one gentleman: "The poor are none the better for them; if you build 500 they will let fast enough. In fact, the more you build the more they want." He implies that the houses produce the inhabitants, who, in virtue of a natural law, press hard upon "the means of housing". Dr. Hunter remarks: "Now these poor must come from somewhere, and as there is no particular attraction, such as doles, at Badsey, it must be repulsion from some other unfit place, which will send them here. If each could find an allotment near his work, he would not prefer Badsey, where he pays for his scrap of ground twice as much as the farmer pays for his".

Continual migration to the towns; continual formation of "surplus population" in the countryside owing to the concentration of farms, the transformation of arable into pasture, the introduction of machinery, and so on; continual eviction of the rural population by the destruction of cottages—all these go hand-in-hand. The more the district is denuded of population, the greater becomes its "relative overpopulation", the stronger is the pressure upon the means of employment, the greater is the absolute excess of the rural population over the housing accommodation, and the greater, therefore, in the villages, is local overpopulation, and the most pestilential overcrowding. The cramming together of human beings in scattered little villages and market towns corresponds to the enforced depopulation of the countryside in general. The incessant rendering of the agricultural labourers "superfluous", despite the diminution in their numbers and despite the increasing quantity of their produce, form the main factors of their pauperism. Yet this same pauperism, or the expectation that they will become paupers, is a motive for their eviction; and the main cause of the abominable housing conditions, which undermine their powers of resistance, and make them nothing better than the slaves of the ground

landlords<sup>1</sup> and the farmers, so that the need to put up with a mere subsistence wage acquires for them the force of a law of nature.

On the other hand, notwithstanding the "relative over-population" of the country districts, the land is really underpopulated. This is not only seen locally, at the points where the outflow of men from the countryside into towns, mines, to the work of railway construction, etc., is most marked. It is to be seen everywhere, in the harvesting season, and at other phases of spring and summer when English agriculture, so carefully managed and so intensive, needs extra hands. Thus, at ordinary times, there are too many agricultural labourers; and at extraordinary times, when for brief periods the cultivation of the soil requires an exceptionally large number of hands, there are too few.<sup>2</sup>

\* "The heaven-born employment of the hind gives dignity even to his position. He is not a slave, but a soldier of peace, and deserves his place in married men's quarters, to be provided by the landlord who has claimed the power of enforced labour similar to that the country demands of a military soldier. He no more receives market price for his work than does a soldier. Like the soldier he is caught young, ignorant, knowing only his own trade and his own locality. Early marriage and the operation of the various laws of settlement affect the one, as enlistment and the Mutiny Act affect the other." Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 132.—Sometimes an exceptionally tender-hearted landowner is actually distressed when he contemplates the solitude he has created. "It is a melancholy thing to stand alone in one's country", said Lord Leicester, when complimented on the completion of Holkham. "I look around, and not a house is to be seen but mine. I am the giant of Giant Castle, and have eaten up all my neighbours."

\* During recent decades there has in France been a similar movement. In proportion as, in that country, capitalist production has gained the mastery over agriculture, it has driven the "surplus" agricultural population into the towns. There, also, we find that bad housing and other disastrous conditions work havoc among the "surplus population". Regarding the "rural proletariat" to which the parcelling out of the land in France has given rise, see Colins, *op. cit.*, and Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, chap. 7. In 1846, the urban population formed 24.42 % of the total population in France, and the rural population 75.58 %. In 1861, the proportions were 28.86 % and 71.14 %, respectively. During the last five years, the decline in the ratio of the rural population to the urban has gone on much more rapidly. As long ago as 1846, Pierre Dupont, in his *Ouvriers*, wrote:

Badly clothed, housed in miserable holes,  
In the garrets, among the rubbish,  
We live with the owls and the thieves,  
Lovers of the shadows.

That is why, in official documents, we find contradictory complaints, coming from the very same places, regarding a lack of labour and a superfluity of labour. A temporary or local deficiency of labour does not bring about a rise in wages, but merely results in the forcing of women and children into fieldwork, and in a continual lowering of the age at which exploitation begins. As soon as the exploitation of women and children gains headway, this, in its turn, becomes a new means of making the adult male agricultural workers superfluous, and of keeping down their wages. In some of the eastern counties, thanks to the working of this vicious circle, there has come into existence, as its finished fruit, the so-called gang system, which I will now briefly describe.<sup>1</sup>

The gang system is mainly confined to the counties of Lincoln, Huntingdon, Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Nottingham, but is met with here and there in the neighbouring counties of Northampton, Bedford, and Rutland. Lincolnshire will serve us as an example. A large part of this county consists of land which has recently come under cultivation, having previously been fenland, and even, as in others of the eastern counties just named, reclaimed from the sea. The steam-engine has worked wonders in the way of drainage. What were originally fens and sand-banks, now yield abundant crops of grain, and pay high rents. The same remark applies to the alluvial land which has been won for cultivation by artificial means as in the island of Axholme and other parishes on the banks of the Trent. When the new farms came into existence, not only were no new cottages built, but old ones were demolished, and the labour needed on the reclaimed land had to come from open villages miles away, by roads winding along the higher ground. There only had the population formerly found refuge from the long-lasting floods of the winter season. The few labourers who are domiciled on the farms of from 400 to 1000 acres (called in this part of the country "confined labourers") are solely employed upon such kinds of agricultural work as goes on all the year round, is heavy, and must be carried on with the aid of horses. On the average there is barely one cottage to 100 acres. For instance, a

<sup>1</sup> *Sixth Report of the Children's Employment Commission*, published at the end of March 1867. This volume is exclusively concerned with the gang system in agriculture.

fenland farmer, giving evidence before the Commission of Inquiry, said: "I farm 320 acres, all arable land. I have not one cottage on my farm. I have only one labourer on my farm now. I have four horsemen lodging about. We get light work done by gangs."<sup>1</sup> The land requires also a good deal of light field labour, such as weeding, hoeing, manuring, the removal of stones, etc. This is done by the gangs, organised bands of persons who live in the open villages.

A gang numbers from 10 to 40 or 50 women; young persons, ranging from 13 to 18 years of age, girls for the most part; and children of both sexes, at ages ranging from 6 to 13 years. At the head is the gang-master, always an ordinary agricultural labourer, generally what is called "a bad lot," a scapegrace, a ne'er-do-well, inclined to drink, but probably an enterprising fellow with a certain amount of ability. He recruits the members of the gang, which works under him, not under the farmer. The gang-master makes his arrangements with the farmer mostly at piece-work rates; and his own income, which on the average is very little larger than that of an ordinary agricultural labourer,<sup>2</sup> depends almost entirely upon his capacity for extracting from his gang the largest amount of labour in the shortest possible space of time. The farmers have discovered that women will only work steadily under the direction of men; and that women and children, when once set to work, tend to work till they drop (as Fourier well knew), whereas the adult male labourer is usually shrewd enough to economise his labour power. The gang-master goes from one farm to another, thus finding occupation for his gang during six or eight months in the year. Employment under his direction, therefore, is more lucrative and more secure for a labourer's family than employment under an individual farmer, who will only engage a few children from time to time. Owing to this circumstance, the gang-master usually has so much influence in the open villages that it is difficult to hire children except through his instrumentality. He therefore makes it a second string to his bow to hire out children individually, apart from the gang.

<sup>1</sup> *Children's Employment Commission, Sixth Report, Evidence*, p. 37, n. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, some of the gang-masters have been able to get on in the world, renting 500-acre farms, or becoming the owners of rows of houses.

The seamy side of this system is that the children and young persons are seriously overworked; that they have to walk great distances from their homes to the farms, often five, six, or seven miles away; and that the gang life is demoralising. Although the gang-master, who in some districts is spoken of as the "driver", is armed with a long stick, he seldom uses it for punitive purposes, and complaints of maltreatment are exceptional. He is a kind of democratic monarch, or may be compared with the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Popularity among his subjects is part of his stock in trade, and he binds them to himself by introducing them to the charms of a nomadic life under his guidance. Coarse freedom, jolly indiscipline, obscene impudence—these are among the attractions of the gang. As a rule the gang-master settles his accounts with the members of the gang in a public house. Then he returns home at the head of the procession, reeling drunk, propped up right and left by a stalwart virago, the children and young persons bringing up the rear, in boisterous spirits, and shouting bawdy songs at the tops of their voices. Sexual incontinence is the order of the day. It is common for girls of thirteen or fourteen to be put in the family way by lads of the same age. The open villages from which the members of the gang are drawn become Sodoms and Gomorrachs, the illegitimate birthrate of these places being twice as high as elsewhere in the kingdom.\* A while back I showed what sort of wives women bred up in this school are likely to become. Their children are born recruits for the gang—unless got out of the way by means of opium before they become old enough.

In this classical form just described, the gang is called the public, common, or tramping gang. But there are "private gangs" as well. These are made up in the same way as the common gang, but are smaller, and instead of working under a gang-master, work under a superannuated farm servant, whom the farmer cannot employ in any better way. The amusements of a gipsy life have vanished in this instance, but, say all the witnesses, the payment is at a lower rate and the children are still worse treated.

This gang system, which has made headway uninter-

\* "Half the girls of Ludford have been ruined by going out" in gangs. *Op. cit.*, p. 6, n. 32.



ruptedly during the last few years,<sup>1</sup> manifestly does not exist for the sake of the gang-master. It exists for the enrichment of the large-scale farmers,<sup>2</sup> or for that of the landowners.<sup>3</sup> For the farmer, there can be no better way of keeping his working staff well below the normal level in respect of numbers, and yet of always having an extra hand ready for extra work; there can be no better way of extracting the greatest possible amount of labour at the lowest possible cost;<sup>4</sup> and there can be no better way of making the adult male labourer "superfluous". The account we have already given will enable the reader to understand why, whereas on the one hand it is admitted that the agricultural workers suffer more or less from unemployment, on the other hand the gang system is declared to be "necessary" because of the lack of adult male labour and because the agricultural workers are said to have flocked to the towns.<sup>5</sup> We see the pole and the counterpole of

<sup>1</sup> The gangs "have greatly increased of late years. In some places they are said to have been introduced at comparatively late dates; in others, where gangs . . . have been known for many years, . . . more and younger children are employed in them". *Op. cit.*, p. 79, n. 174.

<sup>2</sup> "Small farmers never employ gangs. . . . It is not on poor land, but on land which affords rent of from 40s. to 50s. that women and children are employed in the greatest numbers." *Op. cit.*, pp. 14 and 17.

<sup>3</sup> One of these gentry was so much enamoured of his rents that, in a state of virtuous indignation, he informed the Commission of Inquiry that all the hubbub had been raised because of the name given to the system. It would seem, then, that if only a "gang" were termed an "Agricultural Juvenile Industrial Self-supporting Association" everything would be for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

<sup>4</sup> "Gang work is cheaper than other work; that is why they are employed", testifies a sometimes gang-master. *Op. cit.*, p. 17, n. 14.—"The gang system is decidedly the cheapest for the farmer, and decidedly the worst for the children", says a farmer. *Op. cit.*, p. 16, n. 3.

<sup>5</sup> "Undoubtedly much of the work now done by children in gangs used to be done by men and women. More men are out of work now where children and women are employed than formerly." *Op. cit.*, p. 43, n. 202.—On the other hand, "the labour question in some agricultural districts, particularly the arable, is becoming so serious in consequence of emigration, and the facility afforded by railways for getting to large towns, that I" [the evidence is that of the bailiff of a great landowner] "think the services of children are most indispensable". *Op. cit.*, p. 80, n. 180.—The fact is that in the agricultural districts of England, as contrasted with those of the rest of the civilised world, the labour question is a landlords' and

capitalist production in Lincolnshire, where the fields are carefully weeded, while human weeds flourish luxuriantly.<sup>1</sup>

farmers' question. The problem is, how is it possible, despite the continually increasing exodus of the agricultural folk, to maintain a sufficiency of "relative overpopulation" in the country districts, and thus keep the wages of the agricultural labourer at their present low level for all time to come.

<sup>1</sup> The *Public Health Report*, from which I have quoted repeatedly, dealt with this matter of the gang system as part of its discussion of child mortality; but the work has been ignored by the press, and therefore remains unknown to the British reading public. On the other hand, the last *Report of the Children's Employment Commission* supplied "sensational" items such as are always welcome to the newspapers. While the liberal press enquired how it was that the fine gentlemen and ladies and the beneficed clergy with whom Lincolnshire abounds could possibly have allowed such a system to grow up on their estates or under their eyes, and commented on the inconsistency of persons who send missions to the antipodes "for the improvement of the morals of South Sea islanders", the newspapers that catered for the taste of the polite world concentrated attention upon the degraded condition of an agricultural population in which parents were capable of selling their children into such slavery. Seeing how abominable are the conditions to which "refined" people condemn the agricultural labourer, it would not be surprising if he were to eat his own children, instead of merely selling their labour power. The real wonder is what a healthy integrity of character these agricultural labourers have, for the most part, preserved. Official reports prove that the parents detest the gang system. "There is much in the evidence to show that the parents of the children would, in many instances, be glad to be aided by the requirements of a legal obligation, to resist the pressure and the temptations to which they are often subject. They are liable to be urged at times by the parish officers, at times by employers, under threat of being themselves discharged, to be taken to work at an age when . . . school attendance . . . would be manifestly to their greater advantage. . . . All that time and strength wasted; all the suffering from extra and unprofitable fatigue produced to the labourer and to his children; every instance in which the parent may have traced the moral ruin of his child to the undermining of delicacy by the overcrowding of cottages, or to the contaminating influences of the public gang, must have been so many incentives to feelings in the minds of the labouring poor which can be well understood, and which it would be needless to particularise. They must be conscious that much bodily and mental pain has thus been inflicted upon them from causes for which they were in no way answerable; to which, had it been in their power, they would have in no way consented; and against which they were powerless to struggle." *Op. cit.*, p. XX, n. 82, and p. XXIII, n. 96.

## F. Ireland

Before closing this section, we must take a glance at Ireland. First of all, I will give the main facts of the case.

TABLE I.  
LIVE STOCK.

Year.	Horses.		Cattle.	
	Total Number.	Increase (+) or Decrease (-).	Total Number.	Increase (+) or Decrease (-).
1860	619,811	—	3,606,374	—
1861	614,232	— 5,993	3,471,688	— 138,316
1862	602,894	— 11,338	3,254,890	— 216,798
1863	579,978	— 22,916	3,144,231	— 110,695
1864	562,158	— 17,820	3,262,294	+ 118,063
1865	547,867	— 14,291	3,493,414	+ 231,120

Year.	Sheep.		Pigs.	
	Total Number.	Increase (+) or Decrease (-).	Total Number.	Increase (+) or Decrease (-).
1860	3,542,080	—	1,271,072	—
1861	3,556,050	+ 13,970	1,102,042	— 169,030
1862	3,456,132	— 99,918	1,154,324	+ 52,282
1863	3,308,204	— 147,928	1,067,458	— 86,866
1864	3,366,941	+ 58,737	1,058,480	— 8,978
1865	3,688,742	+ 321,801	1,299,893	+ 241,413

Summarising the foregoing table we get:

Horses.	Cattle.	Sheep.	Pigs.
Absolute Decrease. 72,358	Absolute Decrease. 116,626	Absolute Increase. 146,608	Absolute Increase. 28,819 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The decline would be even more conspicuous if we went farther back. For instance, in 1865, there were 3,688,742 sheep, but in 1856, there were 3,694,294; in 1865, there were 1,299,893 pigs, but in 1858, there were 1,409,883.

In the year 1841, the population of Ireland had increased to 8,222,664; in 1851, it had decreased to 6,623,985; in 1861, to 5,850,309; and in 1866, it had shrunk to five and a half millions, approximately the population of the country in the year 1801. The decline began with the famine year, 1846, so that in less than twenty years Ireland had lost more than  $\frac{1}{6}$ ths of its people.<sup>1</sup> Between May 1851 and July 1865, the number of emigrants from Ireland was 1,591,487, more than half a million of whom emigrated during the five-year period 1861 to 1865. In the decade 1851 to 1861, the total number of inhabited houses declined by 52,990. During the same decade, the number of holdings from 15 to 30 acres increased by 61,000, and the number of holdings over 30 acres increased by 109,000, while the total number of farms decreased by 120,000, this falling-off being exclusively due to the disappearance of holdings under 15 acres. Thus there was a centralisation of agriculture.

The decrease in population was naturally accompanied by a decrease in the quantity of products. For our present purposes it will suffice to consider the five-year period from 1861 to 1865, during which half a million emigrants left the country, and the total population declined by more than one-third of a million.

Let us now turn to agriculture, which yields the means of subsistence alike for four-footed beasts and for human

TABLE II.  
INCREASE OR DECREASE IN THE AREA UNDER CROPS  
AND GRASS.

Year.	Cereal Crops.	Green Crops.	Grass and Clover.	Flax.	Total Cultivated Land.
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
1861	— 15,701	— 36,974	— 47,969	+ 19,271	— 81,873
1862	— 72,734	— 74,785	+ 6,623	+ 2,055	— 138,841
1863	— 144,719	— 19,358	+ 7,724	+ 63,922	— 92,431
1864	— 122,437	— 2,317	+ 47,486	+ 87,761	+ 10,493
1865	— 72,450	+ 25,241	+ 68,970	— 50,159	— 28,218
1861-65	— 428,041	— 107,984	+ 82,834	+ 122,850	— 330,860

+ = increase.

— = decrease.

<sup>1</sup> The population of Ireland was 5,319,867, in 1801; 6,084,996, in 1811; 6,869,544, in 1821; 7,828,347, in 1831; and 8,222,664, in 1841

TABLE III.

INCREASE OR DECREASE IN THE AREA UNDER CULTIVATION, PRODUCT PER ACRE, AND TOTAL PRODUCT OF 1865 COMPARED WITH 1864.

Product.	1864.	1865.	Increase.	Decrease.
AREA OF CULTIVATED LAND.				
Wheat .. ..	276,483	266,989	—	9,494
Oats .. ..	1,814,886	1,745,228	—	69,658
Barley .. ..	172,700	177,102	4,402	—
Bere .. ..	} 8,894	10,091	1,197	—
Rye .. ..				
Potatoes .. ..	1,039,724	1,066,260	26,536	—
Turnips .. ..	337,255	334,212	—	3,143
Mangold-wurzels ..	14,073	14,839	316	—
Cabbages .. ..	31,821	33,622	1,801	—
Flax .. ..	301,693	251,433	—	50,260
Hay .. ..	1,609,569	1,678,493	68,924	—
PRODUCE PER ACRE.				
Wheat .. cwt.	13.3	13.0	—	0.3
Oats .. cwt.	12.1	12.3	0.2	—
Barley .. cwt.	15.9	14.9	—	1.0
Bere .. cwt.	16.4	14.8	—	1.6
Rye .. cwt.	8.5	10.4	1.9	—
Potatoes .. tons	4.1	3.6	—	0.5
Turnips .. tons	10.3	9.9	—	0.4
Mangold-wurzels tons	10.5	13.3	2.8	—
Cabbages .. tons	9.3	10.4	1.1	—
Flax .. st. (14 lb.)	34.2	25.2	—	9.0
Hay .. tons	1.6	1.8	0.2	—
TOTAL PRODUCT.				
Wheat .. qrs.	875,782	826,783	—	48,999
Oats .. qrs.	7,826,332	7,659,727	—	166,605
Barley .. qrs.	761,909	732,017	—	29,892
Bere .. qrs.	15,160	13,989	—	1,171
Rye .. qrs.	12,680	18,364	5,684	—
Potatoes .. tons	4,312,388	3,865,990	—	446,398
Turnips .. tons	3,467,659	3,301,683	—	165,976
Mangold-wurzels tons	147,284	191,937	44,653	—
Cabbages .. tons	297,375	350,252	52,877	—
Flax .. st. (14 lb.)	64,506	39,561	—	24,945
Hay .. tons	2,607,153	3,068,707	461,554	— <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The data in these tables are compiled from the materials in *Agricultural Statistics, Ireland, General Abstracts*, Dublin, 1860, et seq., and *Agricultural Statistics, Ireland, Tables showing the estimated average produce, etc.*, Dublin, 1866. These statistics are official, and are laid before parliament annually. [Note to second

beings. In the table on p. 774 we have a statement of the increase or decrease shown in each separate year, as compared with its immediate predecessor. Under the head of "cereals" are classed beans and peas as well as wheat, oats, barley, and rye. The "green crops" include potatoes, turnips, mangolds, beetroot, cabbages, carrots, parsnips, vetches, etc.

In the year 1865, there were included under the heading "grassland" 127,470 additional acres, mainly because the area under the heading "bog and waste unoccupied" decreased by 101,543 acres. If we compare 1865 with 1864, there is a decrease in cereals of 246,667 qrs., of which 48,999 qrs. were wheat, 166,605 qrs. oats, 29,892 qrs. barley, etc. The decrease in potatoes was 446,398 tons, although the area planted with potatoes increased in 1865. (See Table III on page 775.)

Such being the movement of population and of agricultural production in Ireland, let us proceed to examine the movement in the finances of the landlords, the large-scale farmers, and the industrial capitalists of the country. This movement is reflected in the income-tax figures. To help the reader to understand the next table, Table IV (page 777), I should mention that Schedule D, "Industrial Profits", though separate from "Farmers' Profits", includes the incomes of lawyers, doctors, etc.—the so-called "professional" profits. Schedule C and Schedule E, of which no special details are given, include the incomes of civil servants, army and navy officers, the holders of State sinecures, bondholders, etc.

Under Schedule D, the average annual increase of income from 1853 to 1864 was only 0.93 %, whereas, in the same period, in Great Britain, it was 4.58 %. Table V (page 777) shows the distribution of the profits (with the exception of farmers' profits) for the years 1864 and 1865.

edition. The official statistics for the year 1872 show, as compared with 1871, a decrease in the area under cultivation amounting to 134,915 acres.—An increase occurred in the cultivation of green crops, turnips, mangold-wurzels, and the like; a decrease in the area under cultivation for wheat amounting to 16,000 acres; oats, 14,000; barley and rye, 4000; potatoes, 66,632; flax, 34,667; grass, clover, vetches, rape-seed, 30,000. The soil under cultivation for wheat shows for the last five years the following stages of decrease: the acreage was 285,000 in 1868; 280,000 in 1869; 259,000 in 1870; 244,000 in 1871; and 228,000 in 1872. For 1872 we find, in round numbers, an increase of 2600 horses, 80,000 horned cattle, 68,609 sheep; and a decrease of 236,000 pigs.]

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TABLE IV.

THE INCOME-TAX ON THE SUBJOINED INCOMES IN POUNDS STERLING.

	Schedule A. Rent of Land.	Schedule B. Farmers' Profits.	Schedule D. Industrial, etc., Profits.	Total Schedules, A to E.
1860	13,893,829	2,765,387	4,891,652	22,962,885
1861	13,003,554	2,773,644	4,836,203	22,998,394
1862	13,398,938	2,937,899	4,858,800	23,597,574
1863	13,494,091	2,938,823	4,846,497	23,658,631
1864	13,470,700	2,930,874	4,546,147	23,236,298
1865	13,801,616	2,946,072	4,850,199	23,930,340 <sup>1</sup>

TABLE V.

SCHEDULE D INCOME FROM PROFITS (OVER £60) IN IRELAND.

Total yearly income of—

1864 .. .. £4,368,610 divided among 17,467 persons  
1865 .. .. £4,669,979 .. .. 18,081 ..

Yearly income over £60 and under £100—

1864 .. .. £238,626 divided among 5,015 persons  
1865 .. .. £222,575 .. .. 4,703 ..

Of the yearly total income—

1864 .. .. £1,979,066 divided among 11,321 persons  
1865 .. .. £2,028,471 .. .. 12,184 ..

Remainder of the total yearly income—

1864 .. .. £2,150,818 divided among 1,131 persons  
1865 .. .. £2,418,933 .. .. 1,194 ..

Of these—

1864 .. .. £1,083,906 divided among 910 persons  
1865 .. .. £1,097,937 .. .. 1,044 ..  
1864 .. .. £1,066,912 .. .. 121 ..  
1865 .. .. £1,320,996 .. .. 186 ..  
1864 .. .. £430,535 .. .. 105 ..  
1865 .. .. £584,458 .. .. 122 ..  
1864 .. .. £646,377 .. .. 26 ..  
1865 .. .. £736,448 .. .. 28 ..  
1864 .. .. £262,610 .. .. 3 ..  
1865 .. .. £264,528 .. .. 3 ..<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tenth Report of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue, London, 1866.

<sup>2</sup> The total yearly income under Schedule D in this table differs from that given in the preceding ones because of certain allowable deductions.

England, a country which is mainly industrial, a country where capitalist production is fully developed, would have bled to death had it suffered such a drain of population as Ireland has suffered. But Ireland is nowadays nothing more than an agricultural district of England, separated by a wide arm of the sea from the country to which it yields grain, wool, horses and cattle, and industrial and military recruits.

The depopulation of Ireland has thrown much of the land out of cultivation, greatly diminishing the produce of the soil.<sup>\*</sup> Although there has been an increase in the area devoted to the breeding of horses and cattle, we find that, in many branches, there has been an absolute decline; while in those where an advance has taken place, the advance has been scarcely worth mentioning and has been constantly interrupted. Nevertheless, concomitantly with the decline in population, there has been an increase in rents and farming profits, although the farming profits have not risen so rapidly as the rents. This is easy to understand. On the one hand, with the amalgamation of small farms into large ones and the transformation of arable into pasture, a larger proportion of the total product became surplus product. The surplus product grew although the total product of which it formed a fraction diminished. On the other hand, the money value of this surplus product grew even more quickly than its mass, because, during the last twenty years, and especially during the last decade, there has been a steady rise in the English market prices for meat, wool, etc.

Scattered means of production which serve the actual producers as means of employment and subsistence, and do not undergo a self-expansion of value through the incorporation of others' labour, are not "capital", any more than a product consumed by its own producer is a "commodity". When, concomitantly with the decline in population, there was a decline in the mass of the means of production utilised in agriculture, the amount of capital invested in agriculture increased, the reason being that part of what

<sup>\*</sup> When we note that the produce per acre has likewise diminished we must not forget that for a century and a half England has been indirectly exporting the soil of Ireland, without giving its cultivators any means for returning to the land the constituents of which it has been deprived.



had hitherto been scattered means of production was transformed into capital.

The total capital of Ireland utilised in commerce and industry, apart from agriculture, accumulated slowly during the last two decades, the process of accumulation being subject to continuous and extensive fluctuations. On the other hand, the concentration of its individual constituents developed all the more rapidly. Finally (however small the absolute increase), relatively to the dwindling population, the increase in capital was great.

Here under our very eyes and on a large scale, has been going on a process which might serve the orthodox economists supremely well for the support of their dogma that poverty is the outcome of absolute overpopulation, and that equilibrium can be reestablished by depopulation. The Irish experiment is a far more important one than was that inaugurated by the black death in the middle of the fourteenth century, the pestilence on which the Malthusians lavish so many praises. Let me say in passing, that, while the mental simplicity of a schoolmaster is needed to induce any one to apply to the conditions of production and population of the nineteenth century the standard of the fourteenth, even so, only an excess of simplicity could overlook the fact that, whereas in England an enfranchisement and enrichment of the agricultural population followed the black death and the consequent decimation, on the other side of the Channel, in France, the sequels of the same plague were more hopeless servitude and an increase in poverty.<sup>1</sup>

The famine of 1846 cost Ireland more than a million of her population, but only the poorest of the poor. This same famine did not do the least damage to the wealth of the country. The exodus of the next twenty years, the exodus which continues on an increasing scale, did not, like the Thirty Years War on the Continent, destroy the means of production as well as the human beings who used them.

<sup>1</sup> Since Ireland is looked upon as the Promised Land of the "principle of population", Thomas Sadler, before publishing his work on population, had issued his famous book, *Ireland, its Evils and their Remedies* (second edition, London, 1829), in which, by comparing the statistics of the various provinces and of the counties in each province, he showed that poverty in Ireland is not, as Malthus would have us believe, proportional to the population, but in inverse ratio thereto.

The Irish genius has discovered an altogether new way of spiriting a poor people thousands of miles from the scene of its misery. The immigrants to the United States send home considerable sums of money year by year, to pay the travelling expenses of those left behind. Every troop that crosses the Atlantic this year, will next year draw another troop in its wake. Instead of costing Ireland anything, emigration thus constitutes for Ireland one of the most lucrative branches of export trade. It goes on systematically, so that it does not merely bore a transient hole in the population. The hole becomes a place through which, year by year, more persons are pumped out than the increase of population can provide, and there consequently results an annual decline in population.<sup>1</sup>

What was the effect of this emigration upon those who remained behind, upon the workers of Ireland thus freed from the pressure of population? The result was that relative overpopulation is just as great to-day as it was before 1846, that wages are just as low as they were then, that the oppression of the workers has increased, that poverty is bringing about a new crisis. The causes are simple. A revolution in agriculture has gone hand-in-hand with emigration. The reproduction of relative overpopulation has more than kept pace with the absolute depopulation. A glance at Table III shows us how the transformation of arable into pasture must in Ireland have an even more disastrous effect than in England. In the latter, the cultivation of green crops increases with the breeding of cattle; in Ireland it declines. While large areas of formerly tilled land are left fallow or are transformed into permanent pasture, a considerable part of previously uncultivated waste lands and peat-bogs are turned to account for the extension of cattle breeding. The medium-scale and small-scale farmers (I speak of all whose holdings are less than 100 acres) still comprise about  $\frac{3}{10}$ ths of the population.<sup>2</sup> The competition of capitalist farming presses on them ever more and more heavily, so that an increasing proportion of them succumbs in the struggle, and goes to swell the

<sup>1</sup> During the years from 1851 to 1874, the total number of emigrants was 2,325,922.

<sup>2</sup> According to a table in Murphy's *Ireland, Industrial, Political, and Social*, published in 1870, 94.6 % of the holdings are smaller than 100 acres.

ranks of the wage workers. The only large-scale industry in Ireland, the linen industry, needs a comparatively small number of grown men; and, notwithstanding its expansion since the rise in the price of cotton during the years 1861 to 1866, it employs a comparatively insignificant fraction of the population. Like every other great industry, through continuous fluctuations within its own domain, it continually leads to the growth of relative surplus population, even during times when there is an absolute growth in the number of persons it employs. The poverty of the rural population supplies a foundation for gigantic shirt factories, etc., whose labour army is, for the most part, dispersed all over the countryside. Here we encounter once more the above-described system of domestic industry, which, by systematic underpayment and overwork, persistently renders part of the population "superfluous". Finally, although depopulation has less disastrous consequences than in a country where highly developed capitalist production prevails, the process necessarily has a persistent reaction upon the home market. Owing to the gaps which emigration produces, there is a decline, not only in the local demand for labour, but also in the incomes of small shopkeepers, of handicraftsmen, and of the minor industrial workers generally. That accounts for the falling-off in incomes ranging from £60 to £100, as shown in Table V.

As regards the Irish agricultural labourers, we can gain a clear view of their condition from the reports of the Irish Poor Law Inspectors.<sup>1</sup> Since they are the servants of a government which can only maintain itself in power with bayonets, and in virtue of the existence of a real or virtual state of siege, these inspectors find it necessary to be far more guarded in their language than their English colleagues are. Still, they do not allow the government to harbour any illusions. They tell us that wages in the country districts though still extremely low, have during the last twenty years increased by 50 % or 60 %, now ranging on the average from 6s. to 9s. a week. But this ostensible rise is merely a mask for an actual fall in wages, seeing that the rise has not been enough to compensate for the increase in the prices of the necessaries of life which has been going on during

<sup>1</sup> *Reports from the Poor Law Inspectors on the Wages of Agricultural Labourers, in Dublin, 1870.*—See also *Agricultural Labourers (Ireland) Return, etc.*, March 8, 1862.

the same period. In proof of this statement, I will give an extract from the official accounts of an Irish workhouse.

### AVERAGE WEEKLY COST PER HEAD.

Year ending	Provisions and Necessaries.		Clothing.	Total.	
	s.	d.		s.	d.
September 29, 1849.. ..	1	3½	3	1	6½
September 29, 1869.. ..	2	7½	6	3	1½

We see that the price of food has more than doubled, and the price of clothing exactly doubled during the last twenty years.

Apart from this disproportion, a mere comparison of money wages will be far from giving us an accurate result. Before the famine, in the country districts, wages were for the most part paid in kind; now payment in money is the rule. Obviously, therefore, whatever the movement of real wages may have been, there must necessarily have been a rise in money wages. "Previous to the famine, the labourer enjoyed his cabin, . . . with a rood, or half acre, or acre of land, and facilities for . . . a crop of potatoes." He was able to keep pigs and fowls. "But they now have to buy bread, and they have no refuse upon which they can feed a pig or fowls, and they have consequently no benefit from the sale of a pig, fowls, or eggs."<sup>1</sup> In former days, there was no sharp distinction between the agricultural labourers and the smallholders. All together, these formed the stratum of the population which secured employment on the middle-sized and large farms. Only since the catastrophe of 1846 has there come into existence a class consisting exclusively of wage labourers, a class of persons whose only relation with the wage lords is a monetary one.

We know what the housing conditions were in 1846. Since then, they have grown even more abominable. Some of the agricultural labourers, though their number diminishes from day to day, still live on the farms where they work, live in overcrowded cabins, far worse than the very worst made known to us by our study of the conditions which

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

prevail in the English agricultural districts. This statement applies generally, with the exception of certain areas in Ulster. In the south, it applies to the counties of Cork, Limerick, Kilkenny, etc.; in the east, to Wicklow, Wexford, etc.; in the centre, to King's County, Queen's County, Dublin, etc.; in the north, to Down, Antrim, Tyrone, etc.; in the west, to Sligo, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, etc. "The agricultural labourers' huts", exclaims one of the inspectors, "are a disgrace to the Christianity and to the civilisation of this country."<sup>1</sup> To make the hovels yet more attractive to those who have to live in them, it has become the fashion to confiscate the little scraps of land which, from time immemorial, have been attached to the dwellings. "The mere sense that they exist subject to this species of ban, on the part of the landlords and their agents, has . . . given birth in the minds of the labourers to corresponding sentiments of antagonism and dissatisfaction towards those by whom they are thus led to regard themselves as being treated as . . . a proscribed race."<sup>2</sup>

The first act of the agricultural revolution was to sweep away the huts situated on the field of labour. This was done upon a wide scale, and as if in obedience to a word of command. Many of the workers were therefore compelled to seek a refuge in the villages and the towns. There they were thrown like lumber into garrets, cellars, holes and corners, into the worst of slums. Thousands of Irish families noted for their rare attachment to the domestic hearth, for their cheerfulness of spirit, and for the purity of their home life (even the English, eaten up though they be with national prejudice, admit this) were suddenly transplanted into hotbeds of vice. The men had now to seek work from the neighbouring farmers, who would only hire them by the day, this being the most precarious form of wage labour. Hence "they sometimes have longer distances to come to and from work, often get wet, and suffer much hardship, not infrequently ending in sickness, disease, and want".<sup>3</sup>

Again: "The towns have had to receive from year to year what was deemed to be the surplus labour of the rural division;"<sup>4</sup> and then people continue to wonder that "there is still a surplus of labour in the towns and villages, and either a scarcity or a threatened scarcity in some of the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

country divisions."<sup>1</sup> The truth is that this want only becomes manifest "in harvest time, or during spring or at such times as agricultural operations are carried on with activity; at other periods of the year, many hands are idle";<sup>2</sup> that "from the digging out of the main crop of potatoes in October until the early spring following . . . there is no employment for them";<sup>3</sup> and, further, that during the active times they "are subject to broken days and to all kinds of interruptions."<sup>4</sup>

The consequences of the agricultural revolution, that is to say of the transformation of arable into pasture, the introduction of machinery, the utmost economy in the use of labour, etc., are even worse on the estates of those model landlords, who, instead of spending their rents in other countries, are gracious enough to live on their domains in Ireland. In order that the law of supply and demand may be absolutely unhindered in its working, these gentlemen draw their "labour supply . . . chiefly from their small tenants, who are obliged to attend when required to do the landlord's work, at rates of wages, in many instances, considerably under the current rates paid to ordinary labourers, and without regard to the inconvenience or loss to the tenant of being obliged to neglect his own business at critical periods of sowing or reaping."<sup>5</sup>

The uncertainty and irregularity of employment, the frequent return and the long duration of periods of unemployment, all these symptoms of relative overpopulation, figure, likewise, in the reports of the Poor Law inspectors, among the grievances of the Irish agricultural proletariat. The reader will remember that similar phenomena were encountered in our study of the English rural proletariat. But there is a difference, in this respect, between England and Ireland. England is an industrial country, and there the industrial reserve army is recruited from the countryside; but Ireland is an agricultural country, and in Ireland, therefore, the agricultural reserve is recruited from the towns, the cities of refuge for the agricultural workers who have been driven off the land. In England, the super-numeraries of agriculture become factory operatives; in Ireland, those who are forced into the towns, while their competition there tends to keep down the wages of the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

town operatives, remain agricultural labourers, and are constantly returning to the country in search of work.

A Poor Law inspector describes the material condition of the agricultural labourer in the following terms: "Though living with the strictest frugality, his own wages are barely sufficient to provide food for an ordinary family and to pay his rent, and he depends upon other sources for the means of clothing himself, his wife and children. . . . The atmosphere of these cabins, combined with the other privations they are subjected to, have made this class particularly susceptible to low fever and pulmonary consumption."<sup>1</sup> We are not surprised to learn that, according to the unanimous testimony of the inspectors, a sombre discontent pervades the ranks of this class; that they look back enviously into the past, loathe the present, despair of the future, give themselves up to "the evil influence of agitators", and have only one fixed idea, to emigrate to America. This is the land of Cockayne into which the great Malthusian panacea of depopulation has transformed the green isle of Erin.

What a happy life the Irish factory operative leads, one example will show: "On my recent visit to the north of Ireland", says the English factory inspector Robert Baker, "I met with the following evidence of effort in an Irish skilled workman to afford education to his children; and I give his evidence verbatim, as I took it from his mouth. That he was a skilled factory hand, may be understood when I say that he was employed on goods for the Manchester market. 'Johnson.—I am a beetler and work from 6 in the morning till 11 at night, from Monday till Friday. Saturday we leave off at 6 p.m., and get three hours of it [for meals and rest]. I have five children in all. For this work I get 10s. 6d. a week; my wife works here also, and gets 5s. a week. The oldest girl, who is 12, minds the house. She is also cook, and all the servant we have, She gets the young ones ready for school. A girl going past the house wakes me at half-past five in the morning. My wife gets up and goes along with me. We get nothing [to eat] before we come to work. The child of 12 takes care of the little children all the day, and we get nothing till breakfast at eight. At eight we go home. We get tea once a week; at other times we get stirabout, sometimes of oatmeal, sometimes of Indian

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 21 and 13.

meal, as we are able to get it. In the winter we get a little sugar and water to our Indian meal. In the summer we get a few potatoes, planting a small patch ourselves; and when they are done we get back to stirabout. Sometimes we get a little milk as it may be. So we go on from day to day, Sunday and week day, always the same the year round. I am always very much tired when I have done at night. We may see a bit of flesh meat sometimes, but very seldom. Three of our children attend school, for whom we pay 1d. a week a head. Our rent is 9d. a week. Peat for firing costs 1s. 6d. a fortnight at the very lowest." Such are Irish wages, such is Irish life!

The woes of Ireland are once more a daily topic of conversation in England. At the end of 1866 and the beginning of 1867, Lord Dufferin, one of the Irish land-magnates, was, in the columns of the "Times", devoting himself to the solution of the Irish problem. What condescension in so great a lord!

We saw in Table V that, during 1864, of total profits to the amount of £4,368,610, three recipients of surplus value pocketed no more than £262,610; but that in 1865, out of total profits of £4,669,979, the same three champions of "abstinence" pocketed £274,448; in 1864, recipients of surplus value to the number of 26 netted £646,377; in 1865, there were 28 who netted £736,448; in 1864, there were 121 who netted £1,066,912; in 1865, there were 186 who netted £1,320,996; in 1864, there were 1131 who netted £2,150,818, nearly half of the total annual profit. In 1865, there were 1194 who netted £2,418,933, more than half of the total annual profit. But the lion's share which a small and dwindling number of land magnates secure in the form of national rental year by year from England, Scotland, and Ireland, is so monstrous that English statecraft considers it expedient to avoid supplying the public, as regards rents, with the same statistical material that is supplied as regards profits. Lord Dufferin is one of these great landlords. It is, of course, an idea equally "disreputable" and "unsound", that rent-rolls and profits can ever be excessive, or that their plethora can ever be connected in any way with the plethora of poverty among the common people. He confines himself to facts. Well, the fact is that, as the Irish population diminishes, the Irish rent-rolls swell; the depopulation

\* *Reports of Inspectors of Factories*, October 31, 1866, p. 96.



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benefits the landlords, and therefore also benefits the soil, and therefore also benefits the people, who are merely an appurtenance of the soil! He consequently declares that Ireland is still overpopulated, and that the stream of emigration is flowing too sluggishly. If Erin is to be perfectly happy, she must send at least another third of a million of working folk across the Atlantic. The reader must not suppose that Lord Dufferin, besides being a man of imagination, is a physician belonging to the same school as Dr. Sangrado in *Gil Blas*, the practitioner who, when his patients failed to improve, ordered blood-letting and yet again blood-letting, until the sick man got rid of his illness by getting rid of his life. Lord Dufferin is moderate, and is content to ask for a blood-letting which will amount to no more than one-third of a million inhabitants, instead of demanding that Ireland shall be rid of about two millions—without which, in actual fact, the millennium cannot be set up in Ireland. The proof is easy to give.

### NUMBER AND EXTENT OF FARMS IN IRELAND IN 1864.

	Number.	Acres.
(1) Farms not over 1 acre .. ..	48,653	25,394
(2) Farms over 1, not over 5 acres ..	82,037	288,916
(3) Farms over 5, not over 15 acres ..	176,368	1,836,310
(4) Farms over 15, not over 30 acres	136,578	3,051,343
(5) Farms over 30, not over 50 acres	71,961	2,906,274
(6) Farms over 50, not over 100 acres	54,247	3,983,880
(7) Farms over 100 acres .. ..	31,927	8,227,807
(8) Total area .. .. .	—	20,319,924 <sup>1</sup>

The centralisation which went on between 1851 and 1861 was mainly effective in the destruction of farms in the first three categories, those ranging from under 1 acre to 15 acres. It was these above all that had to disappear. As a result, there were 307,058 "supernumerary" farmers. Reckoning at a low estimate four persons to a family, this gives us 1,228,232 persons. On the extravagant supposition that, after the agricultural revolution is over, one-fourth of these can be reabsorbed, there remain to emigrate

<sup>1</sup> The total area includes peat-bogs and waste land.

man, driven out of his country by sheep and bullocks, reappears on the other side of the Atlantic as a Fenian; and, confronting the old Queen of the Seas, there rises, threateningly and ever more threateningly, the Giant Young Republic:

Acerba fata Romanos agunt  
Scelusque fraternae necis.<sup>1</sup>

- \* A bitter fate pursues the Romans,  
And the crime of a brother's murder.

Horace, Epode VII, translated by C. E. Bennett.

## CHAPTER—TWENTY-FOUR

### PRIMARY ACCUMULATION

#### I. SECRET OF PRIMARY ACCUMULATION.

WE have seen how money is transformed into capital; how by means of capital, surplus value is made, and how out of surplus value, more capital is made. But the accumulation of capital presupposes surplus value; surplus value presupposes capitalist production; capitalist production presupposes the existence of considerable quantities of capital and labour power in the hands of the producers of commodities. The whole movement, therefore, seems to turn in a vicious circle, out of which we can only make our way by the assumption that, as a prelude to capitalist accumulation, there has been a process of primary accumulation (Adam Smith terms it "previous accumulation")—an accumulation which is not the outcome of the capitalist method of production, but the starting-point thereof.

In political economy, this primary accumulation plays much the same part that is played by original sin in theology. Sin came into the world because Adam ate the forbidden fruit. The origin of sin is supposed to be explained by a folk-tale. In like manner we are told, as regards primary accumulation, that in times long past there were two sorts of people: some of them, the chosen few, were industrious, intelligent, and, above all, thrifty; the others, lazy rascals, wasted their substance in riotous living. But there is a difference. The theological legend of the Fall tells us this much, at least, why man has been condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his face. On the other hand, the economic history of the Fall reveals to us why there are persons who need do nothing of the kind. No matter! It is from this economic Fall that dates the poverty of the masses, who, for all time, however hard they may work, have nothing to sell but themselves; and thence, likewise, dates the wealth of the few, which continually grows, although the few have long since ceased to work. People still chew the cud of this childish imbecility. Monsieur Thiers, for instance, retails it with statesmanlike solemnity

in detence of property, retails it to his compatriots, at one time a talented nation. As soon as the question of property crops up, it becomes a sacred duty to declare that the spelling book should be the only reading of persons of all ages and all stages of mental development. In the history of the real world, as every one knows, conquest, subjugation, robbery, murder—in a word, force—play leading roles. But the gentle science of political economy has always clung to idyllic notions. "Right and labour", say the economists, have ever been the sole means of enrichment, "our own times" alone excepted. As a matter of fact, the methods of primary accumulation were anything but idyllic!

Money and commodities are not, from the first, capital, any more than the means of production and the means of subsistence are. They have to be transformed into capital. But this transformation can only take place under definite conditions, of which the following form the essentials. Two very different kinds of commodity owners must confront one another and enter into a mutual relation. On the one hand, there must be the owners of money, of the means of production, and of the means of subsistence, who desire by the purchase of others' labour power, to increase the sum of the values they own. On the other hand, there must be free workers, the sellers of their own labour power, and therefore the sellers of labour. They must be "free" workers in a double sense. First of all, they must not themselves form a direct part of the means of production, must not belong to the means of production, as do slaves, serfs, etc. Secondly, the means of production must not belong to them, as the means of production belong to peasant proprietors. Free workers are free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own. With this polarisation of the commodity-market, the fundamental conditions requisite for capitalist production exist. The capitalist system presupposes a divorce between the workers and the ownership of the property through which alone their labour can become effective. As soon as capitalist production is able to stand on its own feet, it does not merely receive this divorce between labour and the means of labour as a legacy from the past, but reproduces it upon a continually increasing scale. The process which clears the way for the capitalist system, therefore, can be

nothing else than the process whereby the worker is divorced from ownership of the means of labour; a process which, on the one hand, transforms the social means of subsistence and the social means of production into capital; and, on the other, transforms the actual producers into wage workers. The so-called primary accumulation, therefore, is nothing other than the historical process whereby the producer is divorced from the means of production. It assumes a "primary" aspect because it belongs to the primary phase that is traversed immediately before the history of capitalism begins, immediately before the establishment of the method of production proper to capitalism.

The economic structure of capitalist society issued out of the economic structure of feudal society. The break-up of feudal society set free the elements for the formation of capitalist society.

The immediate producer, the worker, could not dispose of his own person until he had ceased to be bound to the soil; had ceased to be the slave, serf, or bondman of another person. To become a free seller of labour power, a person able to carry his wares to any market, he must, furthermore, have escaped from the dominion of the guilds, have emancipated himself from the rules and regulations whereby the guilds restricted the working activities of their apprentices and journeymen. From this aspect, the historical movement which transforms the producers into wage workers, is seen, on the one hand, to be a movement for the liberation of these producers from serfdom and from the restrictions of the guilds. That is the only side of the matter which exists for bourgeois historians. But, on the other hand, these newly liberated persons do not come to market in order to sell themselves until they have been robbed of all the means of production, and of all the safeguards of existence which the old feudal institutions provided for them. The history of this expropriation is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.

The industrial capitalists, these new potentates, on their side had not only to displace the master craftsmen of the guilds, but must also rid themselves of the feudal magnates, who owned the sources of wealth. From this outlook, the rise of the industrial capitalists to power was effected by a victorious campaign directed at one and the same time against feudal lordship with its outrageous

privileges, and against the guilds with the restrictions they imposed upon the free development of production and the free exploitation of one man by another. The knights of industry were only able to drive out the knights of the sword by taking advantage of events for which they themselves were not responsible. Their rise was due to means which were just as sordid as the means whereby the Roman freedman was long ago enabled to make himself master of his patron.

The starting-point of the development that gave rise both to the wage worker and to the capitalist, was the servitude of the worker; the advance consisting in a change in the form of this servitude, in the transformation of feudalist exploitation into capitalist exploitation. To understand its course, we need not go back very far. Although we come across the first beginnings of capitalist production as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (when there were scattered developments of the kind in certain Mediterranean towns), the capitalist era, properly speaking, dates from the sixteenth century. Wherever capitalism made its appearance, this occurred in regions where the abolition of serfdom had long since been effected, and where the independent and self-governing towns that were the crowning glory of the Middle Ages had for some time been falling into decay.

In the history of primary accumulation we must regard as epoch-making all revolutions that acted as stepping-stones for the capitalist class in course of formation. Above all, this applies to those moments when great masses of human beings were suddenly and forcibly torn away from the means of subsistence, and hurled into the labour market as masterless proletarians. The expropriation of the agricultural producers, the peasants, their severance from the soil, was the basis of the whole process. In different countries, the history of this expropriation assumed different forms, running through its various phases in different orders of succession, and at different historical periods. Only in England can it be said to have had a typical development, and that is why we take England as our example.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was in Italy, where capitalist production first made its appearance, that serfdom, likewise, first disappeared. In that country, the serf was emancipated before he had acquired any prescriptive right to the soil. His emancipation at once transformed

## 2. THE EXPROPRIATION WHEREBY THE COUNTRYFOLK WERE DIVORCED FROM THE LAND.

In England, serfdom had practically disappeared by the latter part of the fourteenth century. Then, and to a still greater extent in the fifteenth century, the great majority of the population consisted of free peasant proprietors<sup>1</sup>—no matter what may have been the feudal title under which their proprietary right was masked. In the larger seigneurial domains, the sometime bailiff, himself a serf, was replaced by a free farmer. The agricultural labourers, wage earners, consisted in part of peasants who devoted their leisure time to work on the estates of the great land-owners, and in part of an independent class of real wage earners, which was small in number both relatively and absolutely. Even the members of this class of wage earners were, in fact, also independent peasants, inasmuch as, besides their wages, they were given cottages and arable land to the extent of four acres or more. Like the peasants properly so-called, they had the usufruct of the common land, on which they pastured their cattle, and from which,

him into a masterless proletarian, whose new lords were already awaiting him in the towns (most of them legacies from Roman days). When, at the close of the fifteenth century, the revolution in the world market made an end of the commercial supremacy of Northern Italy, a movement, in the reverse direction set in. The urban workers were driven in large numbers into the country districts, where their arrival gave an unprecedented stimulus to the development of small-scale cultivation of the soil, carried on meticulously after the manner of horticulture.

<sup>1</sup> "The petty proprietors who cultivated their own fields with their own hands, and enjoyed a modest competence . . . then formed a much more important part of the nation than at present. If we may trust the best statistical writers of that age, not less than 160,000 proprietors (who, with their families, must have made up more than a seventh of the whole population) derived their subsistence from little freehold estates. The average income of these small landlords . . . was estimated at between £60 and £70 a year. It was computed that the number of persons who tilled their own land was greater than the number of those who farmed the land of others." Macaulay, *History of England*, tenth edition, 1854, vol. I, pp. 333-334.—Even in the last third of the seventh century, four-fifths of the English people were engaged in agriculture and other rural occupations (*op. cit.*, p. 413).—I quote Macaulay for the very reason that, as a systematic falsifier of history, his tendency is to lay as little stress as possible upon such facts.

likewise, they obtained fuel, wood, peat, etc.<sup>1</sup> In all European countries, the feudal method of production was characterised by the division of the land among the greatest possible number of copyholders. The power of the feudal lord, like that of every sovereign, depended, not upon the length of his rent-roll, but upon the number of his subjects; and this depended upon the number of peasant proprietors on his estate.<sup>2</sup> Although, after the Norman conquest, the land of England was divided into huge baronies, including, many of them, more than 900 of the old Anglo-Saxon lordships each, it was bestrewn with small peasant holdings, only interspersed here with the great seignorial domains. Such conditions, in conjunction with the flourishing state of the towns that was characteristic of the fifteenth century, rendered possible the national wealth which Chancellor Fortescue so eloquently describes in his *De laudibus legum Angliæ*; but they excluded the possibility of capitalist wealth.

The prelude to the revolution which laid the foundations of the capitalist method of production, occurred during the last third of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth. Great numbers of masterless proletarians were thrown into the labour market by the break-up of the bands of feudal retainers, who, as Sir James Steuart well says: "everywhere uselessly filled house and castle". Although the royal power (itself a product of bourgeois development) in its endeavour to make sovereignty absolute, forcibly hastened the break-up of these bands, this was by no means the only cause of the phenomenon. What happened

<sup>1</sup> It must never be forgotten that even the serf was not merely the owner (though a tribute-paying owner) of the plot of land appertaining to his dwelling, but was also one of the joint owners of the common land. Mirabeau, in his account of the Prussian monarchy, describing the Silesian peasants under Frederick II, points out that, though they were serfs, they had common lands. "It has not yet been possible to induce the Silesians to divide up the common lands, although in the new Mark, there is hardly a village where this dividing up has not been carried out with the utmost success." *De la monarchie prussienne*, London, 1788, vol. II, pp. 125-126.

<sup>2</sup> Japan, a country where the organisation of landed property is strictly feudal, and where the system of petty peasant proprietorship is fully developed, gives us a far truer picture of the European Middle Ages than do our western history books, consisting of accounts mainly dictated by bourgeois prejudice. It is so easy to be "liberal" at the expense of the Middle Ages!



was that the great feudal lords, in defiant opposition to king and parliament, created a still larger, a much larger, proletariat by forcibly hunting the peasant off the land (although the peasant had the same feudal title as the baron himself), and by usurpation of the common lands. The immediate impetus to this was given in England by the rise of the Flemish wool manufacture, and the corresponding increase in the price of wool. The great feudal wars had destroyed the old feudal nobility, and the new nobles were children of their own age to whom money was the power of all powers. Their motto was the transformation of arable into sheep-walks. Harrison, in his *Description of England*, prefixed to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, tells us how the expropriation of the petty peasants was ruining the country. "What care our great encroachers?" The habitations of the peasants and the cottages of the labourers were razed to the ground or left to decay. "If the old records of every manor be sought, . . . it will soon appear that in some manors 17, 18, or 20 houses are shrunk, . . . that England was never less furnished with people than at the present. . . . Of cities and towns either utterly decayed or more than a quarter or half diminished, though some one be a little increased here or there; of towns pulled down for sheep-walks, and no more but the lordships now standing in them, I could say somewhat." The complaints of these old chroniclers are always overdrawn, but they show clearly enough the impression which the revolution in the circumstances of production was making upon contemporary minds. A comparison between the writings of Fortescue and those of Thomas More affords a graphic demonstration of the chasm between the fifteenth century and the sixteenth. As Thornton admirably phrases it, the English working class was precipitated without transition from the golden age into the age of iron.

The legislative authorities were terrified by the spectacle of this revolution. They had not yet reached that pinnacle of civilisation from which the "wealth of the nations", that is to say the formation of capital and the ruthless exploitation and impoverishment of the masses of the people, is regarded as the last word of statesmanlike wisdom. Lord Bacon, in his life of Henry VII, writes: "Enclosures at that time [1489] began to be more frequent, whereby arable land which could not be manured [tilled] without people

and families, was turned into pasture, which was easily rid by a few herdsmen; and tenancies for years, lives, and at will (whereupon much of the yeomanry lived), were turned into demesnes. This bred a decay of people, and (by consequence) a decay of towns, churches, tithes, and the like. In remedying of this inconvenience, the king's wisdom was admirable, and the parliament at that time . . . they took a course to take away depopulating enclosures, and depopulating pasturage." By an Act of Henry VII, 1489, cap. 19, the destruction of all "houses of husbandry" to which at least 20 acres of land belonged was forbidden. The law was renewed by an Act passed in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Henry VIII. According to the wording of this latter, "many farms and large flocks of cattle, especially of sheep, are concentrated in the hands of a few men whereby the rent of land has much risen and tillage has fallen off, churches and houses have been pulled down, and marvellous numbers of people have been deprived of the means wherewith to maintain themselves and their families". The Act therefore directs the rebuilding of the decayed farmsteads, and fixes a proportion between corn land and pasture land, etc. An Act of 1533 declares that some owners possess as many as 24,000 sheep, and restricts the number permissible for any one owner to 2000.<sup>1</sup> Popular complaints, and the legislation against the expropriation of the small farmers and the peasants (legislation which went on for a century and a half), were fruitless. Bacon unwittingly solves the riddle of the failure. In the twenty-ninth of his *Essays*, he writes: "The device of King Henry VII was profound and admirable, in making farms and houses of husbandry of a standard; that is, maintained with such a proportion of land unto them as may breed a subject to live in convenient plenty, and no servile condition, and to keep the plough in the hands of the owners, and not mere hirelings."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In his *Utopia*, Thomas More says that in England, "your sheep, that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters, now, as I hear say, be become so great devourers, and so wild that they eat up and swallow down the very men themselves". *Utopia*, Robinson's translation, Arber's edition, London, 1869, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Bacon discloses the connexion between a free, well-to-do peasantry, and good infantry. "This did wonderfully concern the might and mannerhood of the kingdom to have farms as it were of a standard sufficient to maintain an able body out of penury, and did in effect amortise a great part of the lands of the kingdom unto the

What the capitalist system required, on the other hand, was that the masses should be in a servile condition, should become the hirelings of capital; and that their means of labour should be transformed into capital. During this period of transition, the legislature tried to preserve four acres of land as an appurtenance of the agricultural labourer's cottage, and forbade him to take lodgers into his cottage. In the reign of James I, Roger Crocker of Front Mill, was punished for having built a cottage in the manor of Front Mill without four acres of land as a permanent annex thereof. Still later, in 1638, under Charles I, a royal commission was appointed to enforce the old laws, especially those relating to this matter of four acres of land per cottage. Cromwell forbade the building of any house within four miles of London unless it was provided with four acres of land. Even in the first half of the eighteenth century, there were complaints when an agricultural labourer's cottage was without an appurtenance of from one to two acres. To-day, the cottager is a lucky man if his cottage has a tiny plot of garden, or if he can rent one or two roods at a considerable distance from his dwelling. "Landlords and farmers", says Dr. Hunter, "work here hand-in-hand. A few acres to the cottage would make the labourers too independent."<sup>1</sup>

hold and occupation of the yeomanry or middle people, of a condition between gentlemen, and cottagers and peasants. . . . For it hath been held by the general opinion of men of best judgment in the wars . . . that the principal strength of an army consisteth in the infantry or foot. And to make good infantry it requireth men bred, not in a servile or indigent fashion, but in some free and plentiful manner. Therefore, if a State run most to noblemen and gentlemen, and that the husbandmen and ploughmen be but as their workfolk and labourers, or else mere cottagers (which are but hous'd beggars), you may have a good cavalry, but never good stable bands of foot. . . . And this is to be seen in France, and Italy, and some other parts abroad, where in effect all is noblesse or peasantry, . . . insomuch that they are inforced to employ mercenary bands of Switzers and the like, for their battalions of foot; whereby also it comes to pass that those nations have much people and few soldiers." *The Reign of Henry VII*, verbatim reprint from Kennet's *England*, 1719 edition, London, 1870, p. 308.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 138.—"The quantity of land assigned [in the old laws] would now be judged too great for labourers, and rather as likely to convert them into small farmers." George Roberts, *The Social History of the People of the Southern Counties of England in Past Centuries*, London, 1856, pp. 184-185.

A new and terrible impetus was given to the forcible expropriation of the masses of the people during the sixteenth century by the Reformation, and by its sequel, the pillaging of the ecclesiastical domains. At the time of the Reformation, the Catholic Church was, under feudal tenure, the owner of a very large proportion of English soil. The suppression of the monasteries, and the associated measures, forced their inmates into the proletariat. The estates of the Church were, in large measure, given to rapacious royal favourites, or were sold at derisory prices to speculative farmers and townsmen, who hunted the copyholders off the land, and compacted their holdings into large estates. The legally guaranteed right of impoverished countryfolk to a share of the tithes was tacitly confiscated.<sup>1</sup> "There are paupers everywhere!" exclaimed Queen Elizabeth after a journey through her kingdom. In the forty-third year of her reign, it was at length found necessary to recognise pauperism officially by the levying of a poor rate. "The authors of this law seem to have been ashamed to state the grounds of it, for", contrary to traditional usage, "it has no preamble whatever."<sup>2</sup> By 16 Charles I, 4, the Poor Law was declared perpetual; and, in fact, it remained in force until 1834, when it assumed a harsher form.<sup>3</sup> But there were

<sup>1</sup> "The right of the poor to share in the tithe, is established by the tenure of ancient statutes." Tuckett, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 804-805.

<sup>2</sup> William Cobbett, *A History of the Protestant Reformation*, § 471.

<sup>3</sup> The characteristics of the Protestant spirit may be recognised from the following. In the south of England, certain landowners and well-to-do farmers put their heads together and propounded ten questions concerning the proper interpretation of the Elizabethan Poor Law. These questions were sent by them to a celebrated lawyer of the day, Sergeant Snigge (subsequently a judge under James I), for his opinion. Here is the ninth question: "Some of the more wealthy farmers in the parish have devised a skilful mode by which all the trouble of executing this Act [the 43rd of Elizabeth] might be avoided. They have proposed that we shall erect a prison in the parish, and then give notice to the neighbourhood, that if any persons are disposed to farm the poor of this parish, they do give in sealed proposals, on a certain day, of the lowest price at which they will take them off our hands; and that they will be authorised to refuse to any one unless he be shut up in the aforesaid prison. The proposers of this plan conceive that there will be found in the adjoining counties, persons, who, being unwilling to labour and not possessing substance or credit to take a farm or ship [lordship, i.e. estate] so as to live without labour, may be induced to make a very advantageous offer to the parish. If any of the poor perish

other results of the Reformation which were even more lasting. Ecclesiastical property had been the religious bulwark of the traditional system of land ownership. With the disappearance of the former, the latter became untenable.<sup>1</sup>

As late as the last decades of the seventeenth century, the yeomanry, an independent peasantry, formed a more numerous class than did the farmers. Yeomen had been the main strength of Cromwell's supporters, and, as even Macaulay admits, they had contrasted favourably with the drunken country squires, and the squires' servants, the country clergymen, who had to marry their masters' cast-off mistresses. By about 1750, the yeomen had disappeared;<sup>2</sup>

under the contractor's care, the sin will lie at his door, as the parish will have done its duty by them. We are, however, apprehensive that the present Act [43rd of Elizabeth] will not warrant a prudential measure of this kind; but you are to learn that the rest of the freeholders of the county, and of the adjoining county of B., will very readily join in instructing their members to propose an Act to enable the parish to contract with a person to lock up and work the poor; and to declare that if any person shall refuse to be so locked up and worked, he shall be entitled to no relief. This, it is hoped, will prevent persons in distress from wanting relief, and be the means of keeping down parishes." R. Blakey, *The History of Political Literature from the Earliest Times*, London, 1855, vol. II, pp. 84-85.—In Scotland, the abolition of serfdom took place some centuries later than in England. As late as 1698, Fletcher of Saltoun, declared in the Scottish parliament: "The number of beggars in Scotland is reckoned at not less than 200,000. The only remedy that I, a republican on principle, can suggest, is to restore the old state of serfdom, to make slaves of all those who are unable to provide their own subsistence."—Eden, *op. cit.*, book I, chap. 1, pp. 60-61, writes: "The decrease of villenage seems necessarily to have been the era of the origin of the poor. Manufactures and commerce are the two parents of our national poor."—Eden, like our Scottish friend who is a republican on principle, makes only one mistake. What rendered the tiller of the soil a proletarian or a pauper was not the abolition of villenage but the abolition of the landworkers' ownership of the land.—In France, where the expropriation of the landworkers was carried out in a different way, we have the counterpart to the English Poor Law in the Ordinance of Moulins, 1571, and in the Edict of 1656.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Rogers although, at the time when he wrote his *History of Agriculture*, he was still professor of political economy in the University of Oxford (the hotbed of Protestant orthodoxy), laid stress, in the preface to that work, upon the pauperisation of the masses of the people by the Reformation.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *A Letter to Sir T. C. Banbury, Bart., on the High Price of Provisions, By a Suffolk Gentleman*, Ipswich, 1795, p. 4.—Even the author of the *Inquiry into the Connection between . . .*, etc., London,

and, in the closing decades of the eighteenth century, the last traces of communal ownership of the land followed in their train. We are not concerned here with the purely economic causes of the agricultural revolution. Our present interest is in the forcible means that were used to bring about the change.

In the days of the Stuart restoration, the English landowners carried out under due form of law a usurpation which upon the Continent was everywhere effected without any legal formalities. They abolished the feudal tenure of land, this meaning that they got rid of all the landowners' obligations to the State; they "indemnified" the State by imposing taxes upon the peasantry and the common people in general; they established modern proprietary rights to estates hitherto held only upon feudal tenure; and, finally, they passed those Laws of Settlement which (allowing for certain differences between the countries) had upon the English landworkers the same effect that the Edict of the Tartar Boris Godunoff in 1587 had on the Russian peasantry.

The "glorious revolution" installed in power, not only William of Orange,<sup>1</sup> but also the territorial and capitalist appropriators of surplus value. These gentry inaugurated the new era by a vast extension of the scale on which the robbery of State lands had hitherto been conducted. Domains were given away, sold at knock-down prices, or even annexed to private estates by direct usurpation.<sup>2</sup> All

1773, a fanatical defender of large-scale farming, writes on p. 133: "I most lament the loss of our yeomanry, that set of men who really kept up the independence of this nation; and sorry I am to see their lands now in the hands of monopolising lords, tenanted out to small farmers, who hold their leases on such conditions as to be little better than vassals ready to attend a summons on every mischievous occasion."

<sup>1</sup> As to the private moral character of this bourgeois hero, read the following: "The large grant of lands in Ireland to Lady Orkney, in 1695, is a public instance of the King's affection, and the lady's influence. . . . Lady Orkney's endearing offices are supposed to have been—*foeda laborum ministeria*" [the dishonourable office of the lips]. No. 4224 in the Sloane Manuscript Collection at the British Museum. The manuscript is entitled, *The Character and Behaviour of King William, Sunderland, etc., as represented in original letters to the Duke of Shrewsbury, from Somers, Halifax, Oxford, Secretary Vernon, etc.*—It is full of curious items of information.

<sup>2</sup> "The illegal alienation of the crown estates, partly by sale and partly by gift, is a scandalous chapter in English history . . . a gigantic fraud on the nation." F. W. Newman, *Lectures on Political*

this was done without the slightest regard for legal etiquette. The princely estates of the modern English oligarchy consist of the crown lands thus fraudulently appropriated, together with the stolen ecclesiastical domains (in so far as these were not lost once more during the republican revolution).<sup>1</sup> Bourgeois capitalists facilitated the operation; among their reasons for this being that they wanted land to become an ordinary article of commerce, that they wanted the field of large-scale agriculture to be extended, that they wanted the supply of masterless proletarians to be increased, and so on. Furthermore, the new landed aristocracy was the natural ally of the new bankocracy, of the recently hatched high finance, and of the great industrialists (who at this time were ardent supporters of protective tariffs). The English bourgeoisie acted with the same keen eye to its own interest as did the Swedish burghers who, for their part, reversing the process, worked hand-in-hand with their economic allies, the peasants, helping the kings to get back the crown lands from the oligarchy by force. This took place from 1604 onwards, under Charles X and Charles XI.

Communal property (to be clearly distinguished from the State property we have just been talking about) was an old Teutonic institution which lived on under cover of feudalism. We have seen how the forcible seizure of the common lands, accompanied for the most part by the transformation of arable into pasture, began in the fifteenth century and lasted on into the sixteenth. But at that time the process was effected by individual acts of violence against which the legislature fought, though vainly, for a hundred and fifty years. The advance that had been made in the eighteenth century is shown in this, that the law itself now became the instrument by which the theft of the people's land was achieved, although the great farmers continued to use their petty private methods in addition.<sup>2</sup>

*Economy*, London, 1851, pp. 129-130.—[Note added by Engels to the fourth edition. For details as to how the present great landed proprietors of England came into their possessions see *Our Old Nobility*, by *Noblesse Oblige* (Howard Evans), London, 1879.]

<sup>1</sup> Read, for instance, Edmund Burke's pamphlet concerning the ducal house of Bedford, whose offshoot was Lord John Russell, "the tomtit of liberalism".

<sup>2</sup> "The farmers forbid cottagers to keep any living creatures besides themselves and children, under the pretence that if they

The parliamentary form of this robbery was to pass Acts for the enclosure of commons; in other words, decrees whereby the great landowners made a present to themselves of the people's land, which thus became their own private property. The laws were decrees expropriating the people. Sir F. M. Eden, although by a specious piece of special pleading he tries to represent communal property as the private property of the great landlords who had taken the place of the feudal lords, refuted his own argument when he went on to demand a "general Act of Parliament for the enclosure of commons", thereby admitting that a parliamentary coup d'état was necessary for the transformation of common land into private property. In like manner, he contradicted himself by demanding that the legislature should compensate the expropriated poor.<sup>1</sup>

While the place of the independent yeomen was taken by tenants-at-will (small farmers, subject to one year's notice, a servile crowd dependent upon the arbitrary whims of their landlords), a systematic seizure of communal landed property helped, side by side with the theft of the State domains, to swell the size of those great farms which, in the eighteenth century, were called "capital farms"<sup>2</sup> or "merchant farms",<sup>3</sup> and to "set the countryfolk at liberty" as a proletariat for the uses of industry.

Nevertheless, the eighteenth century was not yet prepared to accept as wholeheartedly as did the nineteenth, that, in such a system, national wealth must be based upon the poverty of the people. For this reason, there was carried on in the economic literature of the day a vigorous polemic against the "enclosure of commons". From the abundant material at my disposal, I shall give a few extracts

keep any beasts or poultry they will steal from the farmers' barns for their support; they also say, keep the cottagers poor, and you will keep them industrious, etc. But the real fact, I believe, is that the farmers may have the whole right of common to themselves." *A Political Inquiry into the Consequences of Enclosing Waste Lands*, London, 1785, p. 75.

<sup>1</sup> Eden, *op. cit.*, preface.

<sup>2</sup> The term "capital farms" will be found in *Two Letters on the Flour Trade and the Dearness of Corn, by a Person in Business*, London, 1767, pp. 19 and 20.

<sup>3</sup> The term "merchant farms" will be found in *An Inquiry into the Causes of the Present High Prices of Provisions*, London, 1767, p. 11, note. This excellent work, published anonymously, was written by the Rev. Nathaniel Forster.



that will throw a strong light on the circumstances of the time.

"In several parishes of Hertfordshire", says an indignant writer, "twenty-four farms, numbering on the average 50 to 150 acres, have been melted up into three farms."<sup>1</sup> Again: "In Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, the enclosure of common lands has taken place on a very large scale, and most of the new lordships resulting from the enclosure have been turned into pasturage, in consequence of which many lordships have not now 50 acres ploughed yearly, in which 1500 were ploughed formerly. The ruins of former dwelling houses, barns, stables, etc.", are the sole traces of the former inhabitants. "A hundred houses and families have in some open-field villages . . . dwindled to eight or ten. . . . The landholders in most parishes that have been enclosed only fifteen or twenty years, are very few in comparison of the numbers who occupied them in their open-field state. It is no uncommon thing for four or five wealthy graziers to engross a large enclosed lordship which was before in the hands of twenty or thirty farmers, and as many smaller tenants and proprietors. All these are hereby thrown out of their livings with their families and many other families who were chiefly employed and supported by them."<sup>2</sup> It was not only waste land that was thus enclosed. In many cases land held in common, or rented by individuals from the community, was annexed by neighbouring great landlords. "I have here in view enclosures of open fields and lands already improved. It is acknowledged by even the writers in defence of enclosures that these diminished villages increased the monopolies of farms, raised the prices of provisions, and produce depopulation; . . . and even the enclosure of waste lands (as now carried on) bears hard on the poor, by depriving them of a part of their subsistence, and only goes towards increasing farms already too large."<sup>3</sup> Price speaks of "a multitude of little proprietors and tenants,

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Wright, *A Short Address to the Public on the Monopoly of Large Farms*, 1779, pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Stephen Addington, *Inquiry into the Reasons for or against enclosing Open Fields*, London, 1772, pp. 37 and 43, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. R. Price, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 155.—Read Forster, Addington, Kent, Price, and James Anderson, comparing their accounts with the sycophantic prattle of McCulloch in his catalogue, *The Literature of Political Economy*, London, 1845.

who maintain themselves and families by the produce of the ground they occupy by sheep kept on a common, by poultry, hogs, etc., and who therefore will have little occasion to purchase any of the means of subsistence". Such are the "little farmers" to which he refers in the next quotation. "When this land gets into the hands of a few great farmers, the consequence must be that the little farmers will be converted into a body of men who earn their subsistence by working for others, and who will be under a necessity of going to market for all they want. . . . There will, perhaps, be more labour, because there will be more compulsion to it. . . . Towns and manufacturers will increase, because more will be driven to them in quest of places and employment. This is the way in which the engrossing of farms naturally operates. And this is the way in which, for many years, it has been actually operating in this kingdom."<sup>1</sup> He sums up the effect of the enclosures in the following terms: "Upon the whole, the circumstances of the lower ranks of men are altered in almost every respect, for the worse. From little occupiers of land, they are reduced to the state of day labourers and hirelings; and, at the same time, their subsistence in that state has become more difficult."<sup>2</sup> In fact, the usurpation of the common lands

<sup>1</sup> Price, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 159.—We are reminded of ancient Rome. "The rich had got possession of the greater part of the undivided land. They trusted in the conditions of the time, that these possessions would not be again taken from them, and bought, therefore, some of the pieces of land lying near theirs, and belonging to the poor, with the acquiescence of their owners, and took some by force, so that they now were cultivating widely extended domains, instead of isolated fields. Then they employed slaves in agriculture and cattle breeding, because freemen would have been taken from labour for military service. The possession of slaves brought them great gain, inasmuch as these, on account of their immunity from military service, could freely multiply and have a multitude of children. Thus the powerful men drew all wealth to themselves, and all the land swarmed with slaves. The Italians, on the other hand, were always decreasing in number, destroyed as they were by poverty, taxes, and military service. Even when times of peace came, they were doomed to complete inactivity, because the rich were in possession of the soil, and used slaves instead of free men in the tilling of it." Appian, *Civil Wars*, I, 7. The foregoing passage refers to the time prior to the Licinian laws. Military service, which greatly hastened the ruin of the Roman plebeians, was likewise the chief means by which Charlemagne furthered, by forcing-house methods, the transformation of free German peasants into serfs and bondsmen.

and the accompanying revolution in agriculture had so disastrous an effect upon the agricultural labourers that, as Eden himself tells us, between 1765 and 1780 their wages began to fall below the minimum necessary for subsistence, so that a supplement had to be given them in the form of Poor Law relief. Their wages, he writes, "were not more than enough for the absolute necessities of life".

Now let us turn, for a moment, to consider the words of one who defended enclosures and was an opponent of Dr. Price. "Nor is it a consequence that there must be depopulation, because men are not seen wasting their labour in the open field. . . . If, by converting the little farmers into a body of men who must work for others, more labour is produced, it is an advantage which the nation<sup>1</sup> should wish for; the produce being greater when their joint labours are employed on one farm, there will be a surplus for manufactures, and by this means manufactures, one of the mines of the nation, will increase in proportion to the quantity of corn produced."<sup>2</sup>

The stoical calm with which the political economist contemplates the most shameless violation of the "sacred rights of property" and the perpetration of the crudest acts of violence against persons (when these things are essential to establish the foundations of the capitalist method of production) can be studied, for instance, in the person of Sir F. M. Eden, philanthropist though he be, and tory to boot. The whole series of thefts, outrages, and tribulations that accompanied the forcible expropriation of the people in the period that lasted from the end of the fifteenth century to the end of the eighteenth, lead him only to the comforting conclusion: "The due proportion between arable land and pasture had to be established. During the whole of the fourteenth and the greater part of the fifteenth century, there was one acre of pasture to two, three, and even four

<sup>1</sup> The nation to which, of course, the "converted" little farmers must therefore be supposed not to belong!

<sup>2</sup> *An Inquiry into the Connexion between the Present Prices of Provisions, etc.*, pp. 124 and 129.—The following quotation though written from the opposite standpoint, reinforces the statements of the writer of *An Inquiry, etc.*: "Working men are driven from their cottages, and forced into the towns to seek for employment; but then a larger surplus is obtained, and thus capital is augmented." *The Perils of the Nation*, second edition, London, 1848, p. 14.

of arable land. About the middle of the sixteenth century, the proportion was changed to two acres of pasture to two of arable; later on, two acres of pasture to one of arable; until at last the just proportion of three acres of pasture to one of arable land was obtained."

In the nineteenth century, the mere memory of the connexion between the landworkers and communal property had, of course, faded away. To say nothing of more recent times, did the countryfolk ever get a farthing's worth of compensation for the 3,511,770 acres of common land stolen from them between 1801 and 1831, and, in due form of law, presented by the landlords to the landlords?

The last great act of expropriation, the last stage in the divorce of the agricultural population from the soil, has taken the form of what is called the clearing of estates, that is to say the sweeping of men off them. All the English methods hitherto considered, culminated in this "clearing". As we saw in the description of modern conditions given in a former chapter, when there are no more independent peasants to get rid of, the "clearing" of cottages begins, so that the agricultural workers cannot find upon the soil they till the fragment of space requisite for their own housing. What the "clearing of estates" really signifies can be fully realised only by a study of the promised land of modern romantic literature, the Highlands of Scotland. There the process is distinguished by its systematic character, by the grand scale on which it is carried out. Whereas in Ireland the landlords have gone so far as to sweep away several villages at a time, in Scotland areas as large as German principalities are dealt with at one blow. Another special characteristic of the "clearing of estates" in Scotland is constituted by the peculiar form of property under which the embezzled lands used to be held.

The Highland Gaels were organised in clans, each of which was the owner of the land on which it was settled. The representative of the clan, the chief or "great man", was but the titular owner of this land, just as the reigning Queen of England is the titular owner of all the national soil. When the English government succeeded in putting an end to the continual internecine wars waged by these "great men" one against another, and in stopping their perpetual inroads into the Lowlands, it must not be supposed that the chiefs thereupon abandoned their time-

honoured trade of robbery. The trade continued, though in a changed form. On their own authority, they converted their titular ownership into an absolute right of private property; and as this procedure encountered resistance from the clansmen, the chiefs decided to drive the latter out by open force. "A king of England might as well claim to drive his subjects into the sea", says Professor Newman.<sup>1</sup> This revolution, which began in Scotland after the last attempt of the Stuart Pretender, can be followed in its early phases in the writings of Sir James Steuart<sup>2</sup> and James Anderson.<sup>3</sup> In the eighteenth century, the Gaels who were hunted off the land were simultaneously forbidden to emigrate, the object being to drive them by force into Glasgow and other manufacturing towns.<sup>4</sup> For an example of the methods that prevail in the nineteenth century,<sup>5</sup> it will be enough to

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Steuart says: "If you compare the rent of these lands" [he erroneously includes in this economic category the tribute of the taskmen to the clan chief] "with the extent, it appears very small. If you compare it with the numbers fed upon the farm, you will find that an estate in the Highlands maintains, perhaps, ten times as many people as another of the same value in a good and fertile province." *Op. cit.*, vol. I., chap. 16, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> *Observations on the Means of Exciting a Spirit of National Industry, etc.*, Edinburgh, 1777.

<sup>4</sup> In 1860, those who had been expropriated were ordered to Canada under false pretences. Some of them took refuge in the mountains, and in the western isles. Pursued by the police, they had a skirmish with these, and escaped.

<sup>5</sup> "In the Highlands of Scotland, the ancient state of property is daily subverted. . . . The landlord, without regard to the hereditary tenant . . . now offers his land to the highest bidder, who, if he is an improver, instantly adopts a new system of cultivation. The land, formerly overspread with small tenants or labourers, was peopled in proportion to its produce, but, under the new system of improved cultivation and increased rents, the largest possible produce is obtained at the least possible expense: and the useless hands being, with this view, removed, the population is reduced, not to what the land will maintain, but to what it will employ. The dispossessed tenants either seek a subsistence in the neighbouring towns, . . ." David Buchanan, *Observations on, etc., Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations*, Edinburgh, 1814, vol. IV, p. 144.—"The Scotch grandees dispossessed families as they would grub up coppicewood, and they treated villages and their people as Indians harassed by wild beasts do, in their vengeance, a jungle with tigers. Man is bartered for a fleece or a carcase of mutton, nay, held cheaper. . . . Why, how much worse is it than the intention of the Moguls, who, when they had broken into the northern provinces of China, proposed in council to exterminate the inhabitants and convert the

describe the "clearings" made by the duchess of Sutherland. This person, being well informed with regard to matters economic, determined, immediately upon entering into her government, to effect a radical cure and to convert into a sheep-walk the whole county, whose population, by the application of similar methods in the past, had already been reduced to 15,000. During the years 1814-1820 these 15,000 inhabitants, about 3000 families in all, were systematically hunted away and extirpated. All their villages were destroyed and burned, all their tilled fields were converted into pasture. British soldiers were placed at Her Grace's disposal for carrying out these measures, and the redcoats came to blows with the natives. One old woman perished in the flames of her cottage, refusing to leave it. Thus did the duchess gain possession of 794,000 acres of land, which had from time immemorial belonged to the clan. She assigned to the evicted inhabitants about 6000 acres by the seashore, this amounting to two acres per family. The area in question had hitherto lain waste, bringing in no return to the inhabitants. The duchess, in the goodness of her heart, actually went so far as to let this land to the clansmen at an average rent of 2s. 6d. per acre, payable by those who for centuries had shed their blood for her family. The whole of the stolen clanlands, she divided into 29 huge sheep-farms, each inhabited by one family, usually consisting of imported English farm servants. By the year 1825, the 15,000 Gaels had been replaced by 131,000 sheep. The remnant of the aborigines, outcasts on the seashore, were trying to gain a living as fishermen. They had become amphibians, living, as an English writer says, half on land and half on the water, and withal only half living on both.<sup>1</sup>

land into pasture. This proposal many Highland proprietors have effected in their own country against their own countrymen." George Ensor, *An Inquiry concerning the Population of Nations*, London, 1818, pp. 215-216.

<sup>1</sup> When the present duchess of Sutherland entertained Mrs. Beecher Stowe, the authoress of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with great magnificence in London (Her Grace wished to show her sympathy with the negro slaves of the American republic, a sympathy that she prudently forgot, like her fellow aristocrats, during the Civil War, when all the "noble" English hearts were filled with affection for the slaveowners), I published in the "New York Tribune" the facts about the Sutherland slaves. (Some of my information was

But the brave Gaels had to pay even dearer for their romantic idolisation of the "great men" of the clan. The smell of the fish reached the nostrils of these great men. They scented profit, and leased the seashore to the wholesale fish dealers of London. For the second time the Gaels were hunted out.<sup>1</sup>

In the end, however, part of the sheep-walks were turned into deer-forests. Every one knows that there are no real forests in England. In that country, the deer in the parks of the great are domestic cattle, as fat as London aldermen. Scotland, therefore, is the last refuge of the "noble passion". Here is what Somers tells us about the matter in 1848: "In the Highlands, new forests are springing up like mushrooms. Here, on one side of Gaick, you have the new forest of Glenfeshie; and there on the other you have the new forest of Ardverikie. In the same line you have the Black Mount, an immense waste also recently erected. From east to west—from the neighbourhood of Aberdeen to the crags of Oban—you have now a continuous line of forests; while in other parts of the Highlands there are the new forests of Loch Archaig, Glengarry, Glenmoriston, etc. Sheep were introduced into glens which had been the seats of communities of small farmers; and the latter were driven to seek subsistence on coarser and more sterile tracks of soil. Now deer are supplanting sheep; and these are once more dispossessing the small tenants, who will necessarily be driven down upon still coarser land and to more grinding penury. Deer-forests<sup>2</sup> and the people cannot co-exist. One or other of the two must yield. Let the forests be increased in number and extent during the next quarter of a century, as they have been in the last, and the Gaels will perish from their native soil. . . . This movement among the Highland

taken from H. C. Carey's book, *The Slave Trade*, London, 1853, pp. 202-203.) The article was reprinted in a Scottish newspaper, and led to a pretty dispute between this journal and the sycophants of the Sutherlands.

<sup>1</sup> Interesting details on this fish trade will be found in Mr. David Urquhart's "Portfolio", new series.—Nassau W. Senior, in the posthumous work from which I have already quoted, describes "the proceedings in Sutherlandshire" as "one of the most beneficent clearings since the memory of man".

<sup>2</sup> The "deer-forests" of Scotland do not contain a single tree. The sheep are driven off the naked hills, deer are driven in, and then the place is called a "deer-forest". No real afforestation!

proprietors is with some a matter of ambition, . . . with some, love of sport, . . . while others, of a more practical cast, follow the trade in deer with an eye solely to profit. For it is a fact, that a mountain range laid out in forest is, in many cases, more profitable to the proprietor than when let as a sheep-walk. . . . The huntsman who wants a deer-forest limits his offers by no other calculation than the extent of his purse. . . . Sufferings have been inflicted in the Highlands scarcely less severe than those occasioned by the policy of the Norman kings. Deer have received extended ranges, while men have been hunted within a narrower and still narrower circle. . . . One after one the liberties of the people have been cloven down. . . . And the oppressions are daily on the increase. . . . The clearance and dispersion of the people is pursued by the proprietors as a settled principle, as an agricultural necessity, just as trees and brushwood are cleared from the wastes of America or Australia; and the operation goes on in a quiet, business-like way."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Somers, *Letters from the Highlands, or the Famine of 1847*, London, 1848, pp. 12-28, passim. These letters originally appeared in the "Times". I need hardly say that the English economists ascribed the famine from which the Gaels suffered in 1847 to overpopulation. At any rate, the inhabitants were pressing on their food supply. The "clearing of estates", or as it is called in Germany, "Bauernlegen" [see above, footnote, p. 460] was carried on in Germany with especial vigour after the Thirty Years War, and, as late as 1790, led to peasant revolts in Electoral Saxony. Above all, this "clearing of the land" was pushed to an extreme in eastern Germany. In most of the provinces of Prussia, Frederick II was the first to secure the right of property for the peasants. After the conquest of Silesia, he compelled the landlords to rebuild the cottages, the barns, etc., and to equip the peasant farms with cattle and farming implements. He needed soldiers for his army and taxpayers for his exchequer. But how cheerful, in other respects, the peasant's life was under Frederick's financial mismanagement, and under a government that was a hotch-potch of despotism, bureaucracy, and feudalism, may be learned from the following passage, written by Frederick's admirer, Mirabeau: "Flax, then, is one of the main sources of wealth for the cultivator in the north of Germany. Unfortunately for the human race, it is nothing better than an expedient to ward off poverty, for it cannot be considered a means towards wellbeing. Direct taxes, forced labour, servitude of various kinds, combine to crush the German agriculturist, who must in addition pay indirect taxes upon everything that he buys. . . . To heap ruin upon ruin, he dares not sell his products where and how he pleases; he dares not buy whatever he needs from traders who could supply it at the lowest price. All these causes



The spoliation of the property of the Church, the fraudulent alienation of the State domains, the theft of the common lands, the transformation of feudal property and clan property into modern private property (a usurpation effected

gradually drag him down to ruin, and he would be quite unable to pay the direct taxes unless he had recourse to the spinning-wheel. This offers him a way out of his difficulties, providing as it does useful occupation for his wife, his children, his farm servants, his labourers, and himself. But how pitiful is his life, even with this aid! In summer he works like a galley slave, tilling the ground and reaping; he goes to bed at 9 in the evening and rises at 2 in the morning, for thus only can he get through his day's work. In winter, he ought to restore his energies by a prolonged rest; but he would lack grain for the bread that he eats and for the sowing of next year's crops, if he were to sell all that he would have to sell in order to raise enough money to pay the taxes. He must spin that he may fill this gap, . . . and must be diligent about the business. In winter, therefore, the peasant goes to bed at midnight or at one in the morning and rises at 5 or 6; or else he goes to bed at 9 and rises at 2; doing so every day of his life except Sunday. So much work and so little sleep wear people out, and that is why men and women alike grow old far more quickly in the country than in the town." *Op. cit.*, vol III, pp. 212 et seq.—Note added to the second edition. In April 1866, eighteen years after the publication of the work of Robert Somers from which I quoted in the text, Professor Leone Levi gave a lecture before the Society of Arts on the conversion of sheep-walks into deer-forests. Here is his description of the growing devastation of the Scottish Highlands: "Depopulation and transformation into sheep-walks were the most convenient means for getting an income without expenditure. . . . A deer-forest in place of a sheep-walk was a common change in the Highlands. The land-owners turned out the sheep as they once turned out the men from their estates, and welcomed the new tenants—the wild beasts and the feathered birds. One can walk from the Earl of Dalhousie's estates in Forfarshire to John o'Groats, without ever leaving forest land. . . . In many of these woods the fox, the wild cat, the marten, the polecat, the weasel, and the Alpine hare are common; whilst the rabbit, the squirrel, and the rat have lately made their way into the country. Immense tracts of land, much of which is described in the statistical account of Scotland as having a pasturage in richness and extent of a very superior description, are thus shut out from all cultivation and improvement, and are solely devoted to the sport of a few persons for a very brief period of the year."—From the "Economist" of June 2, 1866, I cull the following: "Amongst the items of news in a Scotch paper of last week, we read, . . . 'One of the finest sheep-farms in Sutherlandshire, for which a rent of £1200 a year was recently offered, on the expiry of the existing lease this year, is to be converted into a deer-forest'. Here we see the modern instincts of feudalism . . . operating pretty much as they did when the Norman Conqueror . . . destroyed 36 villages to create the New Forest. . . . Two millions of acres . . . totally laid waste, embracing within their area some of the most fertile lands of Scotland.

by a system of ruthless terrorism)—these were the idyllic methods of primary accumulation. They cleared the ground for capitalist agriculture, made the land part and parcel of capital, while providing for the needs of urban industry the requisite supply of masterless proletarians.

### 3. SAVAGE LEGISLATION AGAINST THE EXPROPRIATED FROM THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY ONWARDS. ACTS OF PARLIAMENT TO FORCE DOWN WAGES.

A masterless proletariat had been created by the breaking-up of the bands of feudal retainers, and by successive acts of forcible expropriation of the land. But it was impossible that those who had been thus hunted off the land could be absorbed by the rising system of manufacture as quickly as they were "set free". Nor could those who were suddenly removed out of their customary surroundings and hurled into new ones, be expected, all in a moment, to submit themselves to the discipline of their new condition. Large numbers of them became beggars, thieves, and vagabonds; in part from inclination, but far more often under pressure of circumstances. In the end of the fifteenth century, and throughout the sixteenth, there were enacted all over western Europe cruel laws against vagrancy. The ancestors of the present working class were punished for becoming vagabonds and paupers, although the condition of vagabondage and pauperism had been forced on them. The legislature treated them as "voluntary" criminals, on the assumption that it rested with them to go on working under conditions that had ceased to exist.

The natural grass of Glen Tilt was among the most nutritive in the county of Perth. The deer-forest of Ben Alder was by far the best grazing ground in the wide district of Badenoch; a part of the Black Mount forest was the best pasture for black-faced sheep in Scotland. Some idea of the ground laid waste for purely sporting purposes in Scotland may be formed from the fact that it embraced an area larger than the whole county of Perth. The resources of the forest of Ben Alder might give some idea of the loss sustained from the forced desolations. The ground would pasture 15,000 sheep, and as it was not more than one-thirtieth part of the old forest ground in Scotland . . . it might, etc. . . . All that forest land is as totally unproductive. . . . It might thus as well have been submerged under the waters of the German Ocean. . . . Such extemporised wildernesses or deserts ought to be put down by the decided interference of the legislature."

In England, this sort of legislation began during the reign of Henry VII.

Then, under Henry VIII, came the Act of 1530. Beggars who were old and were unable to work were to be granted a beggars' licence. On the other hand, there were whipping and imprisonment for sturdy vagabonds. They were to be tied to the cart-tail and whipped until the blood streamed from their bodies; then to swear an oath to go back to their birthplace or to where they had lived during the last three years and "to put themselves to labour". What grim irony! By the Act of 27 Henry VIII, the former statute was renewed, being strengthened by additional clauses. In case of a second arrest for vagrancy, the whipping was to be repeated, and half of one of the offender's ears to be sliced off. A person convicted of a third offence was to be executed as a hardened criminal and an enemy of the common weal.

Then Edward VI came to the throne. The statute passed in 1547, the first year of his reign, declares that if any one refuses to work he will be assigned as a slave to the person who has denounced him as an idler. The master shall feed his slave on bread and water, weak broth, and such refuse meat as he thinks fit. He is entitled to force the slave to do any work, no matter how disgusting, using whip and chain. Should a slave absent himself for a fortnight without leave, the offender is to be condemned to slavery for life, and is to be branded on forehead or back with the letter S. If he should run away thrice, he is to be executed as a felon. The master can sell him, bequeath him, let him out on hire as a slave, like any other personal chattel or brute beast. If the slaves conspire against their masters, again execution is the punishment. Justices of the peace, on information, are to hunt the rascals down. If it happens that a vagabond has been idling anywhere for three days, he is to be sent to his birthplace, then branded on the chest with a V, and thereafter he is to be set to work in chains upon the roads, or at some other labour. Should a vagrant give a false birthplace, then he is to become the life-long slave of this place, its inhabitants, or its corporation, and to be branded with an S. All persons have the right to take away a vagabond's children and to keep them as apprentices, the lads until the age of 24, the girls until the age of 20. Should they run away, these young persons are to become

the slaves of their masters until the attainment of the before-mentioned age. The masters can put them in irons or whip them, etc., if they please. Every master can have an iron ring welded round the neck, the arms, or the legs of his slave for better recognition, and for safekeeping.<sup>1</sup> The last part of this statute provides that certain poor people may be employed by a place or by persons who are willing to give them food and drink and to find them work. Under the name of "roundsmen", parish slaves, of this kind were kept in England until far on into the nineteenth century.

Next take an Act passed in 1572, during the reign of Elizabeth. Unlicensed beggars over 14 years of age are to be severely flogged, and branded on the left ear, unless someone will take them into service for two years. In case of a repetition of the offence, if they are over 18, they are to be executed, unless some one will take them into service for two years. For a third offence, they are to be executed without mercy as felons. Similar statutes: 18 Elizabeth (cap. 13); and another of 1597.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The author of the *Essay on Trade*, 1770, writes: "In the reign of Edward VI, indeed, the English seem to have set, in good earnest, about encouraging manufactures and employing the poor. This we learn from a remarkable statute which runs thus: 'That all vagrants shall be branded, etc.' " *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas More writes in his *Utopia*: "Thus it comes to pass that a greedy and insatiable cormorant and very plague of his native country, may compass about and enclose many thousand acres of ground together within one pale or hedge, the husbandmen be thrust out of their own, or else, either by cunning and fraud, or by violent oppression, they be put besides it, or by wrongs and injuries they be so wearied that they be compelled to sell all: by one means, therefore, or by other, either by hook or crook, they must needs depart away, poor, silly, wretched souls, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, woeful mothers with their young babes, and their whole household, small in substance, and much in number, as husbandry requireth many hands. Always they trudge, I say, out of their known, accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in. All their household stuff, which is very little worth, though it might well abide the sale, yet being suddenly thrust out, they be constrained to sell it for a thing of naught. And when they have wandered abroad till that be spent, what can they then else do but steal, and then justly, pardie, be hanged, or else go about begging. And yet then also they be cast in prison as vagabonds because they go about and work not; whom no man will set a work though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto."—Of these poor fugitives of whom Thomas More says that they were forced to thieve, "7200 great and petty thieves were put to death"

possible shall be concentrated at one pole of society in the shape of capital, while at the other pole are grouped masses of persons who have nothing to sell but their labour power. It does not suffice that these masses shall be forced to sell themselves "voluntarily". In the course of capitalist production, there comes into existence a working class which, by education, tradition, and custom, is induced to regard the demands of this method of production as self-evident laws of nature. The organisation of the fully developed capitalist process of production breaks down all resistance. The continuous formation of a relative surplus population keeps the law of the supply and demand of labour, and therefore the wages of labour, in a rut which is accordant with capital's need for self-expansion. Finally, the daily compulsion of economic relations completes the subjugation of the worker to the capitalist. The direct use of force, apart from economic conditions, goes on, of course, from time to time, but has now become exceptional. In the ordinary course of events, the worker can be left to the "natural laws of production", this meaning that he can be left to his dependence on capital—a dependence arising out of, and guaranteed in perpetuity by, the conditions of production themselves. It is otherwise in the early days of capitalist production. Then the rising bourgeoisie needs and uses the State authority to "regulate" wages, to restrict them within the limits suitable for the making of surplus value, to lengthen the working day, and to keep the worker in a proper condition of dependence. This is an essential element of what is termed primary accumulation.

The class of wage workers, which came into existence during the latter half of the fourteenth century, formed at that time and during the next century only a very small part of the population, and a part whose position was safeguarded by the existence of independent peasant agriculture in the rural districts, and by that of the craft guilds in the towns. Neither in the towns nor in the countryside was there a marked social difference between master and man. The subordination of labour to capital was purely formal, this meaning that the method of production had not yet assumed a specifically capitalist character. The variable element of capital predominated greatly over the constant element. The demand for wage labour, therefore, grew quickly whenever accumulation of capital occurred,

whereas the supply of wage labour grew but slowly to satisfy this demand. A considerable proportion of the national product, which at a later date became transformed into the fund for capitalist accumulation, still passed, in those early days, into the fund for the consumption of the workers.

Legislation concerning wage labour, primarily designed to favour the exploitation of the worker, and, as time passed, remaining invariably hostile towards him,<sup>1</sup> was inaugurated in England by the Statute of Labourers passed in 1349, during the reign of Edward III. Corresponding thereto, in France, we have the ordinances of 1350, issued in the name of King John. English and French legislation run a parallel course, and are identical in tenor. In so far as the aim of these labour statutes was to enforce a lengthening of the working day, I have already discussed the matter in the fifth section of Chapter Eight, and need not return to it now.

The Statute of Labourers was passed at the urgent instance of the House of Commons. A tory writer says naively: "Formerly the poor demanded such high wages as to threaten industry and wealth. Next, their wages are so low as to threaten industry and wealth equally, and perhaps more, but in another way." A tariff of wages was fixed by law for town and country, for piece-work and day-work. Agricultural labourers were to hire themselves out by the year; urban workers were to make their arrangements "in open market". It was forbidden under pain of imprisonment to pay higher wages than those prescribed by statute, and the acceptance of higher wages was punished still more severely. [So also in Sections 18 and 19 of the Statute of Apprentices passed in the reign of Elizabeth, ten days' imprisonment is to be the punishment of one who pays higher wages, but twenty-one days that of one who receives them.] By the statute of 1360, the penalties were increased, and the master was actually empowered to force wages down

<sup>1</sup> "Whenever the legislature attempts to regulate the differences between masters and their workmen, its counsellors are always the masters," writes Adam Smith.—In the same connexion, I may once more quote Linguet's saying: "The spirit of the laws is—property."

<sup>2</sup> *Sophisms of Free Trade*, by a Barrister, London, 1850, p. 53. The writer adds pungently: "We were ready enough to interfere for the employer, can nothing now be done for the employed?"

to the legal limit by the infliction of corporal punishment. All combinations, agreements, oaths, etc., by which masons and carpenters respectively bound themselves, were declared null and void. From the fourteenth century till well on into the nineteenth, combination among the workers was treated as a heinous crime; at length, in 1825, the laws against combination were repealed. The spirit of the Statute of Labourers passed in 1349 and that of succeeding enactments of the same kind is clearly shown by the fact that, whereas a maximum of wages was prescribed, there was absolutely no mention of a minimum.

By the sixteenth century, as the reader will remember, the position of the workers had become much worse than in the fourteenth. Money wages had risen, but not proportionally to the depreciation of the currency and the corresponding rise in the prices of commodities. Real wages, therefore, had fallen. Nevertheless the laws for keeping wages down remained in force, together with the prescription of ear-clipping and branding for those "whom no one is willing to take into service". By cap. 3 of the Statute of Apprentices passed in the fifth year of Elizabeth, the justices of the peace were empowered to fix wages, and to modify them according to the season of the year and the price of commodities. Under James I, these labour regulations were extended to weavers, spinners, and workers of all kinds.<sup>1</sup> In the reign of George II, the laws against

<sup>1</sup> From a clause of a statute passed in the second year of James I (cap. 6), we learn that certain clothmakers took it upon themselves to dictate, in their capacity of justices of the peace, the official tariff of wages for their own workshops.—In Germany, statutes to keep down wages were frequently issued after the Thirty Years War. "The scarcity of servants and labourers was very troublesome to the landed proprietors of the depopulated districts. Villagers were forbidden to let rooms to unmarried men and women. Such persons were to be reported to the authorities, and were to be imprisoned if they were unwilling to be servants, even if they were employed at other work, such as sowing for the peasants on daily wages, or if they were dealers. (*Kaiserliche Privilegien und Sanctiones für Schlesien*, I, 25.) For a whole century, in the decrees of the lesser German rulers, we read bitter invectives concerning the wicked and impertinent rabble that will not reconcile itself to its hard lot, will not be content with the legally prescribed wages. Individual landed proprietors are forbidden to pay more than the State tariff. Nevertheless, the conditions of service shortly after the war were sometimes better than they became a hundred years later. In the year

combinations of workers were made applicable to all manufactures.

In the manufacturing period properly so-called, the capitalist method of production had made so much headway that legal regulation of wages had become impracticable and superfluous; still, it was thought advisable to keep the old weapons in the arsenal for use should necessity arise. As late as the eighth year of George II, a law forbade the payment of higher wages than 2s. 7½d. to journeymen tailors in London and environs, except in cases of general mourning. By cap. 68 of a law passed in the thirteenth year of the reign of George III, the regulation of the wages of silk workers was entrusted to the justices of the peace. In 1796, two decisions of the higher courts were needed to settle whether the edicts of justices of the peace as to wages held good for non-agricultural as well as for agricultural workers. As late as 1799, an Act of Parliament ordered that the wages of the Scottish miners should continue to be regulated by a statute of Elizabeth and by two Scottish Acts passed in 1661 and 1671. How completely circumstances had changed meanwhile is shown by something quite unprecedented that happened in the Lower House. Although for more than four hundred years that assembly had been passing laws prescribing a maximum beyond which wages must on no account rise, we now find, in 1796, Whitbread advocating the legal fixation of a minimum wage for agricultural workers. Pitt opposed this, while agreeing that the condition of the poor was cruel. At length, in 1813, the laws for the regulation of wages were repealed. They had become a ridiculous anomaly now that the capitalists ruled their factories by private legislation; and now that, through the instrumentality of the poor rate, the wages of the landworkers were supplemented to reach an indispensable minimum. The provisions of the labour statutes regarding contracts between masters and wage workers, concerning notice, and the like, which only allow a worker to bring proceedings in a civil court when a master breaks his contract, while permitting criminal proceedings to be taken

1652, Silesian farm servants were given meat twice a week, whereas in the nineteenth century there were parts of Silesia where such persons had meat only three times a year. Furthermore, immediately after the war, wages were higher than they became in the following century." Gustav Freytag.



against a worker who does the same thing, are still in force when I write.

The barbarous laws against combination were abolished in 1825, thanks to the threatening attitude of the proletariat. Nevertheless, the abolition was incomplete. Some of the vestiges of the old statutes remained in force until 1859. At length parliament, by the Act of June 29, 1871, made a pretence of removing the last traces of this class legislation by the legal recognition of trade unions. But an Act of the same date, entitled *An Act to Amend the Criminal Law relating to Violence, Threats, and Molestation*, substantially reestablished the old state of affairs in a new form. By this parliamentary sleight of hand, the means available to the workers during a strike or a lock-out were withdrawn from the field of the laws applying to citizens in general, and subjected to exceptional penal legislation, the interpretation of which was placed in the hands of the factory owners, in their capacity of justices of the peace. Two years earlier, the same House of Commons and the same Mr. Gladstone, acting in their usual honourable fashion, had brought in a Bill for the abolition of all exceptional penal legislation directed against the working class. But it was not allowed to go beyond the second reading, and the matter had dragged on until, at length, the "Great Liberal Party", entering into an alliance with the Tories for this purpose, found courage to turn against the very proletariat which had carried it into power. Not content with this treachery, the "Great Liberal Party" allowed the English judges (ever at the beck and call of the ruling classes) to revive the obsolete laws against "conspiracy", and to apply them to combinations of the workers. We see that only with reluctance, and under pressure from the masses, did the English parliament repeal the laws against strikes and trade unions, after having for five centuries, with unblushing selfishness, itself played the part of a permanent trade union of capitalists directed against the workers.

During the first storms of the revolution, the French bourgeoisie actually ventured to take away from the workers the right of association which these had so recently acquired. By the decree of June 14, 1791, it declared that any combination among the workers was "an attack upon liberty and upon the Declaration of the Rights of Man". The offence was to be punishable with a fine of 500 livres, together

with a loss of the active rights of citizenship for one year.<sup>1</sup> This law, which by means of State compulsion, restricted the struggle between capital and labour within the limits that were most convenient for capital, survived revolutions and changes of dynasty. Even the Reign of Terror left it untouched. Not until quite recently was it expunged from the penal code. Nothing could be more characteristic than the pretext for this bourgeois coup d'état. "Granting", says Chapelier, the referendary of the select committee on this law, "that wages ought to be higher than they are, . . . that they ought to be high enough to free the recipient from a condition of absolute dependence consequent upon the deprivation of the necessities of life, a dependence which is practically equivalent to slavery", nevertheless the workers must not be allowed to come to an understanding about their own interests, or to take joint action which may lessen their "absolute dependence which is practically equivalent to slavery", because, forsooth, they infringe thereby "the liberty of their sometime masters, the present-day entrepreneurs" (the liberty which enables the entrepreneurs to keep the workers in a condition tantamount to slavery!), and because a coalition against the despotism of the quondam masters of the guilds is (guess what!) a restoration of the guilds that have been abolished by the French constitution.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. ORIGIN OF THE CAPITALIST FARMER.

Now that we have recorded the forcible means by which masterless proletarians were created, have studied the barbarous discipline which transformed them into wage

<sup>1</sup> Article I of this law runs as follows: "An annihilation of all kinds of corporations of the same estate and profession being one of the fundamental bases of the French constitution, the reestablishment of these under any pretext and in any form is prohibited." According to Article IV: "If citizens following the same professions, arts, or trades, should enter into discussions or should make among themselves agreements tending to refuse jointly or only to furnish at a fixed price the aid of their industry or of their labours, the said discussions and agreements . . . shall be declared unconstitutional, an attack upon liberty and upon the Declaration of the Rights of Man, etc." In fact, combination on the part of the workers was made a political offence, just as it had been under the old labour statutes. *Révolutions de Paris*, Paris, 1791, vol. III, p. 523.

<sup>2</sup> Buchez and Roux, *Histoire parlementaire*, vol. X, p. 195.

workers, have taken note of the disgraceful activities on the part of the State which turned its policemen to account in order to increase the accumulation of capital by increasing the degree of exploitation of labour, we can return to the question, whence the capital originally came. The expropriation of the rural population, as far as its direct effects are concerned, could only create great landowners. But the origin of the capitalist farmer is a matter upon which we can, so to say, put our fingers, for it was a slow process, continuing through many centuries. The serfs, like the free petty proprietors, held land under varying tenures, and were therefore emancipated under multiform economic conditions.

In England, the bailiff, himself a serf, was the first type of farmer. His position was akin to that of the "villicus" in the days of classical Rome, though his sphere of action was more limited. During the second half of the fourteenth century, the bailiff was replaced by a farmer, whom the landlord supplied with seed, cattle and horses, and agricultural implements. His condition was not very different from that of the peasants, but he exploited a comparatively large amount of wage labour. Soon he developed into a metayer, a tenant who paid as rent a portion of the produce of his farm. He put up part of the agricultural capital, and the landlord the rest. The product was divided in shares arranged by contract. This form speedily disappeared in England, giving place to farming as ordinarily understood. Instead of the bailiff and instead of the metayer, there was a tenant who applied himself to the expansion of his own capital through employing wage workers, and who handed over part of the surplus product, whether in money or in kind, to the landlord, as rent.

As long as, during the fifteenth century, the independent peasant, and the farm labourer who worked part of his time on his own account, were able to enrich themselves by their own labour, the circumstances of the farmer remained mediocre, and his field of production was restricted. But the agricultural revolution during the last third of the fifteenth century and the greater part of the sixteenth century enriched the farmer as rapidly as it impoverished the mass of the rural population.<sup>1</sup> The usurpation of the

<sup>1</sup> Harrison, in his *Description of England*, writes: "Although peradventure four pounds of old rent be improved to forty, toward the

alike of his labourers and his landlord. No wonder, therefore, that, at the close of the sixteenth century, England had a class of "capitalist farmers", men who were wealthy as wealth ran in those days.<sup>1</sup>

## 5. REPERCUSSION OF THE AGRARIAN REVOLUTION ON INDUSTRY. CREATION OF THE HOME MARKET FOR INDUSTRIAL CAPITAL.

We have seen that the expropriation of the agricultural population and the driving of the cultivators from the land went on by fits and starts but was ever and again renewed; and we have seen that thanks to this process the

<sup>1</sup> In France, the *régisseur*, steward, or collector of dues for the feudal lords during the earlier part of the Middle Ages, soon became a man of business, who, by extortion, cheating, and so on, inflated himself into a capitalist. Some of these stewards were themselves noblemen. Consider, for example, the following passage: "This is to certify that Messire Jacques de Thoraine, knight castellan of Besançon, rents from the seigneur who keeps the accounts at Dijon for Monseigneur the duke and count of Burgundy, certain rents belonging to the said manor, from the XXV day of December MCCCCLIX to the XXVIII day of December MCCCCLX." Alexis Monteil, *Traité des matériaux manuscrits, etc.*, p. 244. We see that in this instance, as in all spheres of social life, the lion's share goes to the middlemen. In the economic domain, financiers, stock-exchange speculators, merchants, and shopkeepers skim the cream; in civil law, the lawyer plucks his clients; in politics, the representative is a bigger man than the elector, and the minister is a bigger man than the sovereign; in religion, God is pushed into the background by the "mediator," and the mediator is in turn ousted by the priest, who thrusts himself in as an inevitable intermediary between the good shepherd and his sheep. As in England, so in France, the great feudal domains were divided up into innumerable small homesteads, but upon conditions incomparably more unfavourable for the rural population. During the fourteenth century, the farms, or, as they were called in those days, "*terriens*", came into existence. Their number grew continuously, to far beyond a hundred thousand. For them was paid a rent, ranging in amount from  $\frac{1}{4}$ th to  $\frac{1}{2}$ th of the produce, payable either in money or in kind. These farms were fiefs, sub-fiefs, etc., according to the value and the extent of the land, many of them only containing a few acres. But the farmers had a certain amount of jurisdiction over the dwellers on the soil, the extent of this varying in different grades, of which there were four. It will readily be understood that the agricultural population suffered atrociously under the oppression of all these petty tyrants. Monteil says that in those days there were 160,000 law courts in France, where to-day 4000 tribunals (including those of the justices of the peace) suffice.

urban industries were supplied, again and again, with masses of proletarians entirely unconnected with the corporate guilds. A. Anderson (not to be confounded with James Anderson) regards this as so fortunate a circumstance that, he declares, it must have been due to the direct intervention of providence. Let us pause, for a moment, to consider this factor of primary accumulation. The rarefaction or thinning-out of the independent countryfolk, of those who worked on their own account, did not merely correspond with the condensation of the industrial proletariat (after the fashion in which Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire explains the condensation of cosmic matter in one place as the outcome of its rarefaction in another).<sup>1</sup> Although the number of the tillers of the soil was decreased, the land produced as much fruit as before, or even more, for the revolution in property relations was accompanied by improved methods of cultivation, by more cooperation, by more concentration of the means of production, and so on; and also because the agricultural labourers were not only spurred on to more intensive work,<sup>2</sup> but were also to an ever increasing extent deprived of the field of production in which they could work on their own account. When, therefore, part of the rural population was set free from the land, the means of subsistence with which they had been nourished as landworkers were likewise set free. Such means of subsistence were transformed into the material elements of variable capital. The peasant, expropriated and cast adrift, had to buy the value of these means, in the form of wages, from his new master, the industrial capitalist. As it happened with the means of subsistence, so did it happen with the raw materials that were agricultural means of production. These were transformed into an element of constant capital.

Let us suppose, for instance, that some of the Westphalian peasants (who in the time of Frederick II were all spinners of flax though not of silk) have been forcibly expropriated and driven off the land, and that those who remain have become wage labourers in the employ of large-scale farmers. Simultaneously there comes into existence large spinning mills and weaving sheds, wherein the men "set at liberty" work for wages. The flax looks exactly the same as of old.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Notions de philosophie naturelle*, Paris, 1838.

<sup>2</sup> This point is emphasised by Sir James Steuart.

Not a fibre in it is different, but a new social soul has entered its body. It now forms part of the constant capital of the master manufacturer. In former days, this flax was distributed among a vast number of petty producers, who cultivated it themselves, and spun it in small portions at home with the aid of their families. Now it has been concentrated into the hands of a capitalist, who makes others spin and weave on his behalf. The extra work expended in the spinning of the flax was realised aforetime as an extra income for numberless peasant families; or else, as in the days of Frederick II, in the form of taxes for His Majesty, the king of Prussia. Now it is realised in the profit of a few capitalists. The spindles and the looms, which aforetime were distributed all over the countryside, are now assembled in a few large working barracks, and there likewise are the workers and the raw material assembled. Thenceforward, spindles and looms and raw material, which of yore were means of independent existence for spinners and weavers, are transformed into means for controlling<sup>1</sup> these spinners and weavers, and for extracting unpaid labour from them. It is not obvious on the face of the matter that the great manufactories, any more than it is obvious on the face of the matter that the great farms, have been compacted out of a very large number of lesser foci of production, and that they owe their existence to the expropriation of many independent producers. Yet no unprejudiced observer can fail to recognise the fact. In the days of Mirabeau, the lion of the revolution, the great manufactories still passed by the name of "manufactures réunies", united workshops—just as we speak of fields thrown into one. Says Mirabeau: "People pay attention only to the great manufactories, where hundreds of persons work under one manager; those which are commonly spoken of as united manufactories. Those, on the other hand, where a great many workers labour separately, each on his own account, are hardly thought worth considering; they are put quite in the background. This is a great mistake, for it is only these which constitute a really important constituent of national wealth. . . . The united workshop will provide immense

<sup>1</sup> The capitalist says: "I shall allow you to have the honour of serving me, provided that you give me the little that you have left, in return for the trouble I take in giving you my orders." Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'économie politique*.

wealth for one or two entrepreneurs; but the workers are only wage earners, better paid or worse, and do not share in the least in the entrepreneurs' prosperity. In the separate workshop, on the other hand, no one grows rich, but a great number of workers enjoy a measure of prosperity. . . . The number of diligent and thrifty workers will increase, because they will see in good behaviour, in activity, a means for effecting a notable improvement in their position, instead of merely securing a moderate increase in wages, which can never be an important consideration for the future, seeing that it merely enables people to live somewhat more commodiously but still from hand to mouth. . . . Separate individual manufactories, combined, for the most part with tilling of the soil, are the free ones."<sup>1</sup> The expropriation of part of the countryfolk, and the hunting of them off the land, does not merely "set free" the workers for the uses of industrial capital, together with their means of subsistence and the materials of their labour; in addition it creates the home market.

In fact, the events that transform the petty peasants into wage workers, and transform their means of subsistence and the materials of their labour into the material elements of capital, create at the same time a home market for the capitalists. In former days, the peasant family produced and elaborated the means of subsistence and the raw materials, most of which the same persons subsequently consumed. These raw materials and means of subsistence have now become commodities. The large-scale farmer sells them, finding his market in the manufactories. Yarn, linen, coarse woollen stuffs—things whose raw materials used to be at the disposal of every peasant family, things that were spun and woven by peasants for their own use—are now transformed into articles of manufacture, the market for which is in these same country districts. The many scattered customers, who had hitherto been served by a number of small independent producers, have been concentrated into one great market supplied by industrial

<sup>1</sup> Mirabeau, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 20 to 109, *passim*.—If Mirabeau regards the separate workshops as more economic and more productive than the "united" workshops, and looks upon the latter as nothing better than artificial exotics under government cultivation, this is to be explained by the position of most of the continental manufactures at the time when he wrote.

capital. "Twenty pounds of wool converted unobtrusively into the yearly clothing of a labourer's family by its own industry in the intervals of other work—this makes no show; but bring it to market, send it to the factory, thence to the broker, thence to the dealer, and you will have great commercial operations, and nominal capital engaged to the amount of twenty times its value. The working class is thus amerced to support a wretched factory population, a parasitical shopkeeping class, and a fictitious, commercial, monetary and financial system."† Thus hand-in-hand with the expropriation of those who in former days were independent peasants working on their own account, and with the divorce of these from their means of production, goes the annihilation of rural subsidiary industries, the divorce of manufacture from agriculture. Moreover, nothing but the destruction of rural domestic industry can provide for the home market of a country the extension and the stability requisite for the capitalist method of production.

Nevertheless, the manufacturing period, properly so-called, does not bring about a thoroughgoing transformation of the kind. It will be remembered that manufacture only succeeded in mastering national production here and there, and that behind it there was always a broad background of handicraft production in the towns and of subsidiary home industry in the rural districts. While manufacture destroys these in one form or another, in particular branches, and in certain places, it calls them into existence again elsewhere, because, up to a certain point, it needs them for the preparation of its raw materials. It therefore brings into existence a new class of villagers who, while they practise the cultivation of the soil as a subsidiary calling, find their main occupation in industrial labour, the produce of which they sell to the manufacturers directly, or through the intermediation of dealers. This is one of the causes, though not the main cause, of a phenomenon which at first perplexes the student of English history. From the closing third of the fifteenth century onwards, he comes across complaints, frequently repeated though at intervals, concerning the spread of capitalised production into the country districts, accompanied by the progressive destruction of the peasantry. On the other hand, he finds that this peasantry is always being reconstituted, although in

† David Urquhart, *op. cit.*, p. 120.



smaller numbers and invariably under worse conditions.<sup>1</sup> The main reason is that England is at one time predominantly a grain-growing country and at another predominantly a cattle-breeding country, and the extent of peasant cultivation varies with the alternations in this respect. Not until large-scale industry, based on machinery, comes, does there arise a permanent foundation for capitalist agriculture. Then the enormous majority of the rural population is fully expropriated; and therewith is completed the divorce between agriculture and rural domestic industry (whose roots, spinning and weaving, are torn up by the new system).<sup>2</sup> Modern industry, therefore, for the first time succeeds in effecting, on behalf of industrial capital, the conquest of the whole of the home market.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cromwell's time forms an exception. While the Commonwealth lasted, the mass of the English people of all strata rose out of the degradation into which they had sunk under the Tudors.

<sup>2</sup> Tuckett is aware that the modern woollen industry has sprung, with the introduction of machinery, from manufacture proper and from the destruction of rural and domestic industries. Cf. Tuckett, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 144.—"The plough, the yoke, were 'the invention of gods and the occupation of heroes'. Are the loom, the spindle, the distaff, of less noble parentage? You sever the distaff and the plough, the spindle and the yoke, and you get factories and poorhouses, credit and panics, two hostile nations, agricultural and commercial." David Urquhart, *op. cit.*, p. 122.—Now comes Carey and, certainly with good reason, complains that England is doing its utmost to transform all other countries in the world into purely agricultural ones whose needs for factory-made goods England herself will supply. He declares that in this way Turkey has been ruined, because, "the owners and occupants of land have never been permitted by England to strengthen themselves by the formation of that natural alliance between the plough and the loom, the hammer and the harrow". *The Slave Trade*, p. 125. According to Carey, Urquhart himself is one of the chief agents in the ruin of Turkey, where Urquhart has, in the English interest, been engaged in free-trade propaganda. The cream of the joke is that Carey (an ardent russo-phil, by the way) wants to prevent the process of separation by the very system of protection which accelerates it.

<sup>3</sup> Philanthropic English economists, such as Mill, Rogers, Goldwin Smith, Fawcett, etc., and liberal factory owners, such as John Bright and Company, ask the English landed proprietors (like God asking Cain what had become of Abel): "Where are our thousands of freeholders gone?—Where do you come from? From the destruction of those freeholders!" They would do well to push the question further, and ask: "Where are the independent weavers, spinners, and handicraftsmen gone?"

## 6. ORIGIN OF THE INDUSTRIAL CAPITALIST.

The origin of the industrial<sup>1</sup> capitalist was a less gradual affair than that of the farmer. Doubtless many small guild masters, and yet more independent petty artisans or even wage workers, developed into small capitalists; and later (extending by degrees the scale of the exploitation of wage labour, and thus extending accumulation), some of them developed into full-blown capitalists. In the infancy of capitalist production, matters often took much the same course as during the early growth of the medieval town system, when the question which of the runaway serfs should become masters and which should become servants was to a great extent decided by the earlier or later date of their flight. The snail's pace of this method was by no means accordant with the commercial requirements of the new world market created by the great geographical discoveries at the end of the fifteenth century. But the Middle Ages had handed down two distinct forms of capital, ripening under extremely different socio-economic auspices; and both of these, prior to the era when the capitalist method of production became established, ranked as "capital" without qualification. I refer to usurers, capital and merchants' capital.

"At present, all the wealth of society goes first into the possession of the capitalist. . . . He pays the landowner his rent, the labourer his wages, the tax and the tithe gatherer their claims, and keeps a large, indeed the largest, and a continually augmenting share of the annual produce of labour for himself. The capitalist may now be said to be the first owner of all the wealth of the community, though no law has conferred on him the right to this property. . . . This change has been effected by the taking of interest on capital, . . . and it is not a little curious that all the lawgivers of Europe endeavour to prevent this by statutes, viz. statutes against usury. . . . The power of the capitalist over all the wealth of the country is a complete change in the right of property, and by what law, or series of laws,

<sup>1</sup> The term "industrial" is used here in contradistinction to "agricultural". In the "categorical" sense, the farmer is just as much an industrial capitalist as is the factory owner.

was it effected?"<sup>1</sup> The author would have done well to remember that revolutions are not made by laws.

In the country districts, the feudal structure of society, and in the towns, the guild organisation, hindered the transformation of money capital into industrial capital—the transformation of the money capital that had been formed by means of usury and commerce.<sup>2</sup> These hindrances vanished when feudal society was dissolved, when the bands of retainers were broken up, when the countryfolk were expropriated and in part driven off the land. The new manufactures were inaugurated in seaports, or else in parts of the countryside where the old urban system did not run, and where the guilds which were a part of that system had no say. In England, therefore, there was a fierce struggle between the corporate towns and these new industrial nurseries.

The discoveries of gold and silver in America; the extirpation of the indigens in some instances, their enslavement or their entombment in the mines in others; the beginnings of the conquest and looting of the East Indies; the transformation of Africa into a precinct for the supply of the negroes who were the raw material of the slave trade—these were the incidents that characterised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These were the idyllic processes that formed the chief factors of primary accumulation. Hard upon their heels came the commercial war between the European nations, fought over the whole surface of the globe. It was opened when the Netherlands broke away from Spain; it assumed gigantic proportions in England's anti-Jacobin war; and it found a recent sequel in the opium wars against China.

The various factors of primary accumulation may be classed more or less chronologically, and with special reference to certain countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Holland, France, and England. In the last named, at the end of the seventeenth century, they were systematically assembled in the colonial system, the national debt system,

<sup>1</sup> *The Natural and Artificial Rights of Property Contrasted*, London, 1832, pp. 98–99, etc. This work, published anonymously, was written by Thomas Hodgskin.

<sup>2</sup> As late as 1794, the petty clothmakers of Leeds sent a deputation to parliament petitioning for a law to forbid any merchant from becoming a factory owner. Aikin, *op. cit.*

the modern system of taxation, and the modern system of production. To some extent they rested upon brute force, as, for instance, in the colonial system. One and all, they relied upon the power of the State, upon the concentrated and organised force of society, in order to stimulate the transformation of feudal production into capitalist production, and in order to shorten the period of transition. Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power.

Writing of the Christian colonial system, W. Howitt, who makes a speciality of Christianity, says: "The barbarities and desperate outrages of the so-called Christian race, throughout every region of the world, and upon every people they have been able to subdue, are not to be paralleled by those of any other race, however fierce, however untaught, and however reckless of mercy and of shame, in any age of the earth."<sup>1</sup> The history of the colonial administration of Holland, the model capitalist nation during the seventeenth century, "is one of the most extraordinary relations of treachery, bribery, massacre, and meanness".<sup>2</sup> Especially characteristic was the system of kidnapping practised at Celebes in order to secure slaves for use in Java. The kidnappers were carefully trained for the purpose. The chief agents in this nefarious trade were the actual thief, the interpreter, and the seller; the main purchasers were the native princes. The young people who were kidnapped were kept in the dungeons of Celebes until they were ready for sending to the slave ships. According to an official report: "This one town of Macassar, e.g., is full of secret prisons, one more horrible than the other, crammed with unfortunates, victims of greed and tyranny, fettered in chains, forcibly torn from their families." Wishing to get possession of Malacca, the Dutch bribed the Portuguese governor of the town, promising to pay him the

<sup>1</sup> *Colonisation and Christianity, a Popular History of the Treatment of the Natives by the Europeans in all their Colonies*, London, 1838, p. 9. —Concerning the treatment of slaves, I may mention, as a good compilation, that of Charles Comte, *Traité de la législation*, third edition, Brussels, 1837.—Those who want to learn what the bourgeois makes of himself and of the worker whenever he can, without restraint, model the world after his own image, should study this matter in detail.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Stamford Raffles, sometime lieutenant-governor of Java, *History of Java and its Dependencies*, London, 1817.

sum of £21,875 as the price of his treason. When he admitted them within the walls, in the year 1641, as per bargain, they hastened to his house and assassinated him, wishing to "abstain" from payment. Wherever they set foot, devastation and depopulation followed. In 1750, the population of Banjuwangi, a province in Java, was 80,000; by 1811, it had been reduced to 8000. Such are the sweets of commerce!

The English East India Company, as is well known, was not only politically supreme in India, but had an exclusive monopoly of the tea trade, as of the China trade generally, and of the transport of goods to and from Europe. But the coasting trade of India and among the islands, and also the internal trade of India, were a monopoly of the higher officials of the company. The monopolies of salt, opium, betel, and other wares, were inexhaustible mines of wealth. The officials fixed the prices at their own sweet will, and fleeced the unhappy Hindus unmercifully. The governor-general took part in this private traffic. His favourites received contracts under conditions which enabled them, since they were cleverer than the alchemists, to make gold out of nothing. Great fortunes sprang up like mushrooms, primary accumulation going ahead without the original output of so much as a shilling. The report of the impeachment of Warren Hastings is peppered with instances. Here is one. A contract for opium was given to a certain Sullivan when he was just setting out on an official mission to a part of India remote from the districts where opium was grown. He therefore sold his contract to a man named Binn for £40,000. The same day, Binn resold the contract for £60,000. The second buyer, who actually carried out the contract, deposed that he had made vast profits. According to a list laid before parliament, the company and its employees received £6,000,000 from the natives of India as gifts between 1757 and 1766. In the years 1769 and 1770, the English brought about a famine by buying up all the rice and by refusing to sell it again except at fabulous prices.<sup>1</sup>

The treatment of the aborigines was, naturally, worst of all in the plantations which were intended to serve only

<sup>1</sup> In the year 1866, in the one province of Orissa, more than a million Hindus perished of hunger. Nevertheless an attempt was made to replenish the Indian State treasury out of the price at which necessities of life were sold to the starving people.

for export trade, such as the West Indies; and in rich and well populated countries, such as Mexico and India, which were delivered over to plunder. But even in the colonies properly so-called, primary accumulation was true to its Christian character. In 1703, the Puritans of New England, sober virtuosi of Protestantism, by a decree of their assembly, set a premium of £40 upon every Indian scalp and every captured redskin. In 1720, £100 was offered for every scalp. In 1744, when Massachusetts Bay denounced a particular tribe as rebels, the following prices were offered "For a scalp taken from a male of twelve years and upwards, £100 new currency; for a male prisoner, £105; for females and children taken prisoner, £50; for the scalps of squaws and children, £50." A few decades later, the colonial system took vengeance on the offspring of the pious Pilgrim Fathers, who had now revolted against the land of their origin. At English instigation, they were tomahawked by mercenaries in English pay. The British parliament declared bloodhounds and scalping to be "means that God and nature has given into our hand".

Under the influence of the colonial system, commerce and navigation ripened like hothouse fruit. Chartered companies were powerful instruments in promoting the concentration of capital. The colonies provided a market for the rising manufactures, and the monopoly of this market intensified accumulation. The treasures obtained outside Europe by direct looting, enslavement, and murder, flowed to the motherland in streams, and were there turned into capital. Holland, the first country to develop the colonial system to the full, had attained the climax of its commercial greatness as early as the year 1648. It was "in almost exclusive possession of the East India trade and the commerce between the south-east and the north-west of Europe. Its fisheries, its mercantile marine, and its manufactures, surpassed those of any other country. The total capital of the republic probably exceeded that of all the rest of Europe put together." Gülich forgets to add that by 1648 the common folk of Holland were more overworked, more impoverished, and more brutally oppressed than those of all the rest of Europe put together.

To-day, industrial supremacy implies commercial supremacy. In the period of manufacture properly so-called, on the other hand, it was commercial supremacy which implied

industrial supremacy. Hence the preponderant role of the colonial system in those days. That system was a "strange god" who had mounted the altar cheek by jowl with the old gods of Europe, and who, one fine day, with a shove and a kick, swept them all into the dustbin. The new god proclaimed the making of surplus value to be the sole end and aim of mankind.

The system of public credit (this meaning the system of national debts), whose early beginnings can be traced in Genoa and Venice before the close of the Middle Ages, spread all over Europe during the manufacturing period. The colonial system, with its seaborne commerce and its trading wars, served as a forcing house. That was why the credit system first struck firm roots in Holland. National debt (i.e. the sale of the State, whether despotic, constitutional, or republican) gives the capitalist era its characteristic stamp. The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possession of modern peoples is—their national debt.<sup>\*</sup> Hence, logically enough, the modern doctrine that a nation grows richer the more deeply it is in debt. Public credit becomes the credo of capital. With the rise of the system of national debt, want of faith in this institution comes to be regarded as the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost.

The public debt becomes one of the most powerful stimuli of primary accumulation. With the wave of an enchanter's wand, "the funds" endow barren money with the power of reproduction, thus transforming it into capital, and this without the risk and the trouble inseparable from its investment in industrial undertakings, and even from putting it out upon usury. The creditors of the State, in actual fact, surrender nothing, for the money that they lend is transformed into public bonds, easily negotiable, bonds which for practical purposes can serve as so much hard cash. Furthermore, the system of national debt has not merely produced, by these means, a class of idle bondholders; has not merely brought into being the improvised wealth of financiers who play the part of middlemen between the government and the nation; has not merely originated the tax farmers, the merchants, and the private manu-

<sup>\*</sup> William Cobbett remarks that in England all public institutions are designated "royal"; but that, as compensation for this, there is a "national" debt.

facturers, to whom a goodly share of every national loan accrues as capital fallen from heaven. In addition, it has given rise to joint-stock companies, to dealings in negotiable securities of all kinds, to stock-jobbing—in a word, to gambling on the stock exchange and to the modern bankocracy.

From the first, the great banks decorated with national titles were merely associations of private speculators, who took up their stand by the side of governments, and, thanks to the privileges they received, were in a position to advance money to the State. Hence the accumulation of the national debt has no more infallible index than the successive increases in the share capital of these banks, whose full development dates from the foundation of the Bank of England in 1694. The Bank of England began by lending its money to the government at 8 %. At the same time, it was empowered by parliament to coin money out of this identical capital, by lending it again to the public in the form of banknotes. It was allowed to use these notes for discounting bills, making advances on commodities, and buying the precious metals. Ere long, this credit money of its own manufacture became the medium in which the Bank of England made loans to the State, and paid, on behalf of the State, the interest on the national debt. Nor was it enough that it should thus give with one hand in order to take back with the other, and more than it had given. In addition, while thus receiving, it remained the everlasting creditor of the nation, down to the uttermost farthing. By degrees it inevitably became the keeper of all the gold and silver of the country, and the centre of gravity of all the commercial credit. At about the date when, in England, people gave up the practice of burning witches, they began to hang the forgers of banknotes. The writings of the day, those of Bolingbroke, for instance, shows what contemporaries thought of the sudden appearance of this brood of bankocrats, financiers, bondholders, brokers, stock-jobbers, and speculators.<sup>1</sup>

Concurrently with the appearance of the various national debts, there arose an international credit system which

<sup>1</sup> "If the Tartars were to invade Europe nowadays, it would be a very difficult matter to make them understand what sort of a being is the man whom we call a financier." Montesquieu, *Esprit des lois*, London edition, 1769, vol. IV, p. 33.



often served to hide one of the sources of primary accumulation in this nation or in that. Thus the villainies of the Venetian system of spoliation were a hidden source of the capital wealth of Holland, inasmuch as decaying Venice lent large sums of money to the Dutch. There were similar relations between Holland and England. As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, the manufactures of Holland had been greatly outstripped by her chief competitor, and she had ceased to be a leading commercial and industrial nation. From 1701 to 1776, therefore, one of the main lines of Dutch business was the lending out of enormous amounts of capital, especially to England, the great rival. The same thing is going on to-day in the relations between England and the United States. A great deal of capital which makes its appearance in the United States without any birth certificate, was yesterday in England the capitalised blood of children.

Since the national debt is buttressed by the public revenue, which must provide whatever sums are needed for the annual payment of interest, etc., the modern system of taxation is a necessary supplement to the system of national loans. The loans enable the government to defray extraordinary expenditure without, for the moment, imposing fresh burdens on the taxpayers; but in the end, higher taxes have to be paid in return for this advantage. On the other hand, the increase in taxation due to the accumulation of the debts that are contracted one after another, makes it necessary for the government to have recourse again and again to fresh loans in order to defray new extraordinary expenses. The modern fiscal system, whose pivot is formed by taxes on the necessities of life (of course making these dearer), therefore bears within itself the germs of an automatic progression. Excessive taxation is now not so much an incident as a principle. In Holland, where this system was first inaugurated, the noted patriot De Witt extolled it in his *Maxims* as the best system for making the wage earner submissive, frugal, diligent, and—overburdened with labour. Here; however, we are not so much concerned with the disastrous influence which excessive taxation has upon the position of the wage earner, as upon the way in which it leads to the forcible expropriation of peasants, handicraftsmen, in a word, all the members of the lower middle class. About that there are no two

opinions, even among bourgeois economists. The expropriative efficacy of excessive taxation is intensified by the protective system, an integral part thereof.

The undoubted fact that the national debt and the fiscal system which is its handmaid have had a considerable share in bringing about the capitalisation of wealth and the expropriation of the masses, has led many writers, such as Cobbett, Doubleday, and others, to believe, though wrongly, that this is the chief cause of the poverty of the common people in modern times.

The protective system was an artifice for the making of factory owners, for the expropriation of independent workers, for the capitalisation of the national means of production and the national means of subsistence, for forcibly shortening the transition from the medieval to the modern system of production. The various States of Europe scrambled for the patent of this discovery. As soon as they had entered the service of the makers of surplus value, they were not content to fleece their own people, indirectly by protective tariffs, directly by premiums upon export, and the like. In dependent neighbouring countries, industry was forcibly uprooted, as, for example, happened to the woollen manufacture of Ireland under English rule. On the continent of Europe, in accordance with Colbert's prescription, the method was greatly simplified. Here the primary capital of the industrialists was, to a great extent, directly obtained from the State treasury. "Why", asks Mirabeau, "should people go far afield in search of the cause of Saxony's brilliant successes in manufacture before the Seven Years War? National debt, to the tune of a hundred and eighty millions!"<sup>\*</sup>

The colonial system, national debt, the heavy burden of taxation, protection, commercial wars, and so on—these offspring of the manufacturing period properly so-called—grew luxuriantly during the childhood of large-scale industry. The birth of the latter was celebrated by a massacre of the innocents; or by its counterpart, a systematic kidnapping of children. Like the royal navy, the factories secured their recruits by means of the press-gang. Inured as Sir F. M. Eden is to the horrors of the expropriation of the countryfolk from the close of the fifteenth century down to his own day (the end of the eighteenth century),

<sup>\*</sup> Mirabeau, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, p. 101.

prepared though he is complacently to rejoice in this process as "essential" for establishing capitalist agriculture and "the due proportion between arable and pasture land"—he does not show the same amount of economic insight as regards the necessity for the kidnapping of children and their enslavement in order to transform manufacture into machinofacture and to establish the due proportion between capital and labour power. He writes: "It may, perhaps, be worthy the attention of the public to consider, whether in manufacture, which, in order to be carried on successfully, requires that cottages and workhouses should be ransacked for poor children; that they should be employed by turns during the greater part of the night and robbed of that rest which, though indispensable to all, is most required by the young; and that numbers of both sexes, of different ages and dispositions, should be collected together in such a manner that the contagion of example cannot but lead to profligacy and debauchery; will add to the sum of individual or national felicity."<sup>1</sup>

Now hear Fielden: "In the counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and more particularly in Lancashire, the newly invented machinery was used in large factories built on the sides of streams capable of turning the water-wheel. Thousands of hands were suddenly required in these places, remote from towns; and Lancashire, in particular, being, till then, comparatively thinly populated and barren, a population was all that she now wanted. The small and nimble fingers of little children being by very far the most in request, the custom instantly sprang up of procuring apprentices from the different parish workhouses of London, Birmingham, and elsewhere. Many, many thousands of these little, hapless creatures were sent down into the north, being from the age of seven to the age of thirteen or fourteen years old. The custom was for the master to clothe his apprentices and to feed and lodge them in an 'apprentice house' near the factory; overseers were appointed to see to the works, whose interest it was to work the children to the utmost, because their pay was in proportion to the quantity of work that they could exact. Cruelty was, of course, the consequence. . . . In many of the manufacturing districts, but particularly, I am afraid, in the guilty county to which I belong [Lancashire],

<sup>1</sup> Edén, *op. cit.*, vol. I, bk. II, chap. I, p. 421.

cruelties the most heart-rending were practised upon the unoffending and friendless creatures who were thus consigned to the charge of master manufacturers; they were harassed to the brink of death by excess of labour, . . . were flogged, fettered, and tortured in the most exquisite refinement of cruelty; . . . they were in many cases starved to the bone while flogged to their work and . . . even in some instances . . . were driven to commit suicide. . . . The beautiful and romantic valleys of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Lancashire, secluded from the public eye, became the dismal solitudes of torture, and of many a murder. The profits of manufacturers were enormous; but this only whetted the appetite that it should have satisfied, and therefore the manufacturers had recourse to an expedient that seemed to secure to them those profits without any possibility of limit; they began the practice of what is termed 'night-working', that is, having tired one set of hands, by working them throughout the day, they had another set ready to go on working throughout the night; the day-set getting into the beds that the night-set had just quitted, and in their turn again, the night-set getting into the beds that the day-set quitted in the morning. It is a common tradition in Lancashire, that the beds never get cold."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.—As to the earlier infamies of the factory system, see also Aikin (1795), *op. cit.*, p. 219, and Gisborne, *Inquiry into the Duties of Men*, 1795, vol. II.—When, owing to the introduction of the steam-engine, the factories were removed from the neighbourhood of waterfalls in the countryside to the middle of towns, the "abstemious" maker of surplus value had there child labour ready to his hand, without being forced to seek slaves from the workhouses.—In 1815, when Sir R. Peel (the father of the "minister of plausibility") brought in his Bill for the protection of children, Francis Horner, a shining light of the bullion committee and an intimate friend of Ricardo, said in the Lower House: "It is notorious that, with a bankrupt's effects, a gang, if he might use the word, of these children had been put up to sale, and were advertised publicly as part of the property. A most atrocious instance had been brought before the Court of King's Bench two years before, in which a number of these boys, apprenticed by a parish in London to one manufacturer, had been transferred to another, and had been found by some benevolent persons in a state of absolute famine. Another case more horrible had come to his knowledge while on a [parliamentary] committee . . . that, not many years ago, an agreement had been made between a London parish and a Lancashire manufacturer, by which it was stipulated, that with every 20 sound children one idiot should be taken."

With the development of capitalist production in the manufacturing period, the public opinion of Europe had lost the last vestiges of shame and conscience. The nations bragged cynically of every infamy which could serve as a means for the accumulation of capital. Read, for instance, the naive commercial annals of the worthy A. Anderson. Here we find trumpeted forth as a triumph of English statecraft that, when the peace of Utrecht was signed, England, by the Asiento treaty, extorted from the Spaniards the privilege of carrying on the slave trade, hitherto confined as far as the English were concerned to a traffic between the African coast and the English West Indies, between Africa and Spanish America as well. England acquired the monopoly right of supplying Spanish America with 4800 negroes every year until 1743. Simultaneously, this served as an official cover for British smuggling. It was upon the foundation of the slave trade that Liverpool became a great city, for there the slave trade was the method of primary accumulation. Almost down to our own day, there have been "respectable" citizens of Liverpool ready to write enthusiastically about the slave trade. See, for instance, Dr. Aikin's already quoted work, written in 1795, where he speaks of "that spirit of bold adventure which has characterised the trade of Liverpool, and rapidly carried it to its present state of prosperity; has occasioned vast employment for shipping and sailors, and greatly augmented the demand for the manufactures of the country."<sup>1</sup> In the year 1730, Liverpool had 15 bottoms employed in the slave trade; in 1751, there were 53; in 1760, there were 74; in 1770, there were 96; and in 1792, there were 132.

The cotton industry, while introducing child slavery into England, gave at the same time an impetus towards the transformation of the slave system of the United States, which had hitherto been a more or less patriarchal one, into a commercial system of exploitation. Speaking generally, the veiled slavery of the European wage earners became the pedestal of unqualified slavery in the New World.<sup>2</sup>

So much pains did it cost to establish the "eternal

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> In 1790, there were in the English West Indies 10 slaves to 1 freeman. In the French West Indies, 14 to 1; in the Dutch West Indies, 23 to 1. Henry Brougham, *An Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of the European Powers*, Edinburgh, 1803, vol. II, p. 74.

natural laws" of the capitalist method of production, to complete the divorce of the workers from the means of labour, to transform at one pole the social means of production and the social means of subsistence into capital, while transforming at the other pole the masses of the population into wage workers, into free "labouring poor", that artificial product of modern history.<sup>1</sup> As Augier said,<sup>2</sup> money "comes into the world with a birthmark on the cheek"; it is no less true that capital comes into the world soiled with mire from top to toe, and oozing blood from every pore.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The phrase "labouring poor" made its appearance in English laws as soon as the class of wage earners attained notable proportions. The "labouring poor" were contrasted, on the one hand with the "idle poor" (beggars, etc.) and, on the other hand, with the workers who, pigeons not yet plucked, were still possessors of their own means of labour. This same phrase "labouring poor" was lifted from the laws into political economy, where it is found in the writings of Culpeper, J. Child, etc., down to Adam Smith and Eden. We can, therefore, appraise the good faith of the "execrable political cant-monger", Edmund Burke, who described the expression "labouring poor" as "execrable political cant". Burke was a sycophant who, in the pay of the English oligarchy, played the romanticist against the French Revolution, just as, in the pay of the North American colonies, at the outset of the American troubles he had played the liberal against the English oligarchy. To the very marrow, he was a commonplace bourgeois. It was he who said: "The laws of commerce are the laws of nature, and therefore the laws of God." *Op. cit.*, pp. 31-32. No wonder, then, that, true to the laws of God and nature, he always sold himself in the best market. An excellent portrait of Edmund Burke in the liberal phase is to be found in the writing of the Rev. Mr. Tucker. Tucker was a parson and a tory, but, for the rest, an honourable man, and a competent political economist. In view of the abominable lack of principle that we see on all hands to-day, and in view of the devout faith in "the laws of commerce", it is our bounden duty again and again to stigmatise the Burkes, whose only difference from their successors was that they had talent!

<sup>2</sup> Marie Augier, *Du crédit public*, Paris, 1842.

<sup>3</sup> "Capital is said by a Quarterly Reviewer to fly turbulence and strife, and to be timid, which is very true; but this is very incompletely stating the question. Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit, just as nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent certain will produce eagerness; 50 per cent, positive audacity; 100 per cent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent, and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged. If turbulence and strife will bring a profit, it will freely encourage both. Smuggling and the slave trade have amply proved all that is here stated." T. J. Dunning, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

## 7. HISTORICAL TENDENCY OF CAPITALIST ACCUMULATION.

What does the primary accumulation of capital, its historical origin, amount to? In so far as it is not the direct transformation of slaves and serfs into wage earners (a mere change of form), it signifies nothing other than the expropriation of the immediate producers, that is to say the making an end of private property based upon the labour of its owner.

Private property, as contrasted with social or collective property, exists only where the means of labour and the external conditions of labour belong to private individuals. But the character of private property differs according as the private individuals are workers or non-workers. The innumerable shades which, at the first glance, seem to be exhibited by private property, are merely reflexions of the intermediate conditions that lie between these two extremes.

The worker's private ownership of the means of production is the basis of petty industry; and petty industry is an indispensable condition for the development of social production and of the free individuality of the worker. Of course, this method of production is also found within the slaveholding system, within the system of serfdom, and within other dependent relationships. But it only flourishes, only manifests its full energy, only assumes its adequate and classical form, where the worker is the free private owner of the means of labour which he uses; only when the peasant owns the land he tills, and when the handicraftsman owns the tools which he handles as a virtuoso.

This method of production presupposes a parcelling-out of the soil, a scattered ownership of the instruments of production. Just as it excludes concentration of these means into a few hands, so does it exclude cooperation, the division of labour within the process of production, the social mastery and regulation of the forces of nature, the free development of the social energies of production. It is only compatible with narrow limits for production and society, limits that are the outcome of spontaneous growth. The desire to perpetuate the existence of such limits would be, as Pecqueur has rightly said: "a decree for the perpetuation of universal mediocrity". At a certain level of development, this method of production

brings into the world material means which will effect its own destruction. Thenceforward there stir within the womb of society forces and passions which feel this method of production to be a fetter. It must be destroyed, it is destroyed. Its destruction, the transformation of the individual and scattered means of production into socially concentrated means of production, the transformation of the pygmy property of the many into the titan property of the few, the expropriation of the great masses of the people from the land, from the means of subsistence, and from the instruments of labour—this terrible and grievous expropriation of the populace—comprises the prelude to the history of capital. It comprises a series of forcible measures, of which we have passed in review those only that have been epoch-making as methods of the primary accumulation of capital. The expropriation of the immediate producers is effected with ruthless vandalism; and under the stimulus of the most infamous, the basest, the meanest, and the most odious of passions. Self-earned private property, the private property that may be looked upon as grounded on a coalescence of the isolated, individual, and independent worker, with his working conditions, is supplanted by capitalist private property, which is maintained by the exploitation of others' labour, but of labour which, in a formal sense, is free.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as this process of transformation has sufficiently disintegrated the old society, has decomposed it through and through; as soon as the workers have been metamorphosed into proletarians, and their working conditions into capital; as soon as the capitalist method of production can stand upon its own feet—then the further socialisation of labour and the further transformation of the land and of the other means of production into socially utilised (that is to say, communal) means of production, which implies the further expropriation of private owners, takes on a new form. What has now to be expropriated, is no longer the labourer working on his own account, but the capitalist who exploits many labourers.

This expropriation is brought about by the operation of

<sup>1</sup> "We are in an entirely new condition of society; . . . our tendency is to divorce every kind of property from every kind of labour." Sismondi, *Nouveaux principes de l'économie politique*, vol. II, p. 434.



the immanent laws of capitalist production, by the centralisation of capital. One capitalist lays a number of his fellow capitalists low. Hand-in-hand with such centralisation, concomitantly with the expropriation of many capitalists by a few, the cooperative form of the labour process develops to an ever increasing degree; therewith we find a growing tendency towards the purposive application of science to the improvement of technique; the land is more methodically cultivated; the instruments of labour tend to assume forms which are only utilisable by combined effort; the means of production are economised through being turned to account only by joint, by social labour. All the peoples of the world are enmeshed in the net of the world market, and therefore the capitalist regime tends more and more to assume an international character. While there is thus a progressive diminution in the number of the capitalist magnates (who usurp and monopolise all the advantages of this transformative process), there occurs a corresponding increase in the mass of poverty, oppression, enslavement, degeneration, and exploitation; but at the same time there is a steady intensification of the wrath of the working class—a class which grows ever more numerous, and is disciplined, unified, and organised by the very mechanism of the capitalist method of production. Capitalist monopoly becomes a fetter upon the method of production which has flourished with it and under it. The centralisation of the means of production and the socialisation of labour reach a point where they prove incompatible with their capitalist husk. This bursts asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.

The capitalist method of appropriation proceeding out of the capitalist method of production, and consequently capitalist private property, is the first negation of individual private property based upon individual labour. But, with the inexorability of a law of nature, capitalist production begets its own negation. It is a negation of a negation. This second negation does not reestablish private property, but it does reestablish individual property upon the basis of the acquisitions of the capitalist era; i.e. on cooperation and the common ownership of the land and of the means of production (which labour itself produces).

The transformation of scattered private property based upon individual labour into capitalist property is, of course,

a far more protracted process, a far more violent and difficult process, than the transformation of capitalist private property (already, in actual fact, based upon a social method of production) into social property. In the former case we are concerned with the expropriation of the mass of the people by a few usurpers; in the latter case we are concerned with the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The progress of industry, which the bourgeoisie involuntarily and passively promotes, substitutes for the isolation of the workers by mutual competition, their revolutionary unification by association. Thus the development of large-scale industry cuts from under the feet of the bourgeoisie the ground upon which capitalism controls production and appropriates the products of labour. Before all, therefore, the bourgeoisie produces its own gravediggers. Its downfall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable. . . Among all the classes that confront the bourgeoisie to-day, the proletariat alone is really revolutionary. Other classes decay and perish with the rise of large-scale industry, but the proletariat is the most characteristic product of that industry. The lower middle class—small manufacturers, small traders, handicraftsmen, peasant proprietors—one and all fight the bourgeoisie in the hope of safeguarding their existence as sections of the middle class. . . . They are reactionary, for they are trying to make the wheels of history turn backwards." Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, London, 1848. English translation by Eden and Cedar Paul, London, 1929.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### MODERN THEORY OF COLONISATION.

IN political economy there is a current confusion between two very different kinds of private property, one of which is based upon the producer's own labour, whilst the other is based upon the exploitation of the labour of others. Not only do the economists forget that the latter kind of property is the direct antithesis of the former; they forget, likewise, that the latter can only grow upon the tomb of the former.

In western Europe, where the science of political economy was born, the process of primary accumulation has been completed, more or less. The capitalist regime in this part of the world has either mastered the whole field of national production; or else, in those regions where economic conditions are still comparatively undeveloped, capitalism nevertheless controls, indirectly, those strata of society which, though falling into decay, survive upon the basis of the obsolete method of production, and continue to exist side by side with capitalism. To this ready-made world of capital, the political economist applies notions of law and property derived from a precapitalist era; and he does so the more zealously and the more unctuously, the louder the facts cry out against his ideology.

It is otherwise in the colonies.<sup>1</sup> There the capitalist regime encounters on all hands the resistance of producers who own the means of production with which they work, and who can gain wealth for themselves by their own labour instead of working to enrich a capitalist. The contradiction between these diametrically opposed economic systems works itself out in practice as a struggle between the two. When the capitalist is backed up by the power of the mother country, he tries, by forcible means, to clear out of his way the modes of production and appropriation that are based upon the independent labour of the producers. Whereas,

<sup>1</sup> We are speaking here of colonies in the strict sense of the term, of countries with virgin soil, colonised by free immigrants. Economically considered, the United States is still nothing more than a colony of Europe. Furthermore, under this head, come the sometime "plantations" in which the abolition of slavery has completely altered the conditions.

in the mother country, self-interest constrains the political economist, the sycophant of capital, to declare that the capitalist method of production is theoretically identical with its opposite; in the colonies, self-interest compels him to make a clean breast of it, and to acknowledge frankly that the two methods of production are antagonistic. To this end he shows that the development of the social productivity of labour, cooperation, the division of labour, the large-scale application of machinery, and the like, are impossible without the expropriation of the workers and a suitable transformation of their means of production into capital. In the interest of what is called "national wealth", he casts about for artificial means which will ensure the poverty of the common people. His apologetic armour, therefore, crumbles away bit by bit, like touchwood.

E. G. Wakefield's great merit is, not that he discovered anything new concerning the colonies,<sup>1</sup> but that he discovered, in the colonies, the truth as to the conditions of capitalist production in the mother country. Just as the system of protection in its early days<sup>2</sup> tried to manufacture capitalists artificially in the mother country; so Wakefield's colonisation theory, which England attempted for a while to enforce by Act of Parliament, tried to manufacture wage workers in the colonies. Wakefield spoke of this as "systematic colonisation".

First of all, he discovered that in the colonies the ownership of money, the means of subsistence, machinery, and the other means of production, do not suffice to stamp the owner as a capitalist unless there also exist, as correlative, wage workers, other persons who are compelled to sell themselves "voluntarily". He made the discovery that capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons, and a relation determined by things.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Peel, he says lamentingly, took with him from England to Swan River,

<sup>1</sup> Such scarce flashes of insight as Wakefield has upon the topic of colonisation were anticipated by the elder Mirabeau, the physiocrat, and much earlier than that by English economists.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, protection became essential for a time in the international competitive struggle. But, whatever the reasons for protection, its consequences remain the same.

<sup>3</sup> "A negro is a negro. In certain circumstances, and only then, he becomes a slave. A mule is a machine for spinning cotton. In certain circumstances, and only then, it becomes capital. Detached from these circumstances, it is no more capital than gold in and by

Western Australia, means of subsistence and means of production to the value of £50,000. He had the foresight to take with him, in addition, 3000 persons, men, women and children, members of the working class. But, on arrival at his destination, Mr. Peel was "left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river".<sup>1</sup> Poor Mr. Peel, who had provided for everything, except for the export of the English relations of production. He had forgotten to bring these with him to Swan River!

Before I come to Wakefield's discoveries, two preliminary remarks must be made. We know that the means of production and the means of subsistence are not capital so long as they remain the property of the immediate producer. They only become capital under conditions in which they can at the same time serve as the means of exploitation and subjugation of the worker. But in the brain of the political economist their capitalist soul is so closely wedded to their material substance, that he continues to call them "capital" even when they are the exact opposite. Thus it is with Wakefield. Furthermore, the splitting-up of the means of production into the individual properties of a number of mutually independent workers, each of them working on his own account, is termed by him "the equal division of capital". It is with the political economist as with the feudal jurist. The latter continued to apply to purely monetary relations the labels derived from his notions of feudal law.

"If", says Wakefield, "all the members of the society are supposed to possess equal portions of capital, . . . no man . . . would have a motive for accumulating more capital than he could use with his own hands. This is to some extent the case in new American settlements, where a passion for owning land prevents the existence of a class of labourers for hire."<sup>2</sup> So long, therefore, as the worker can accumulate on his own account (and he can do this, as long as he owns the means of production with which he works), capitalist accumulation and the capitalist method of production are impossible. The class of wage workers indispensable

itself is money, or than sugar is the price of sugar. . . . Capital is a social relation of production. It is a historical relation of production." Karl Marx, *Lohnarbeit und Kapital* (Wage Labour and Capital), "Neue Rheinische Zeitung," No. 266, April 7, 1849.

<sup>1</sup> E. G. Wakefield, *England and America*, vol. II, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 17.

to capitalism, does not exist. How, then, in old Europe, was the expropriation of the worker from the requisites for labour brought about, thus creating capital and wage labour? This, says Wakefield, was effected by a social contract of a quite original kind. "Mankind have adopted, a . . . simple contrivance for promoting the accumulation of capital"—which, of course, since Adam's days has loomed before their imaginations as the only purpose of their existence—"They have divided themselves into owners of capital and owners of labour. . . . This division was . . . the result of concert and combination."<sup>1</sup> In a word, the mass of mankind expropriated itself, in honour of the "accumulation of capital". One would suppose, then, that this instinct for self-denying fanaticism would, above all, have free play in the colonies; for there only do men and things exist under conditions which might make it possible to translate a social contract from dreamland into the world of reality. Were things thus, why should "systematic colonisation" be called upon to replace the spontaneous colonisation which is its opposite? "In the northern States of the American Union, it may be doubted whether so many as a tenth of the people would fall under the description of hired labourers. . . . In England, . . . the labouring class compose the bulk of the people."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the impulse towards self-expropriation for the sake of capital is so rare among working folk that, according to Wakefield, slavery is the only natural basis of colonial wealth. His "systematic colonisation" is but an expedient to which he is driven because, nowadays he has to do with free men instead of with slaves. "The first Spanish settlers in St. Domingo did not obtain labourers from Spain. But, without labourers" [read, without slaves], "their capital must have perished, or, at least, must soon have been diminished to that small amount which each individual could employ with his own hands. This has actually occurred in the last colony founded by Englishmen—the Swan River settlement—where a great mass of capital, seeds, implements, and cattle, has perished for want of labourers to use it, and where no settler has preserved much more capital than he can employ with his own hands."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 42, 43, and 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 5.

We have seen that the expropriation of the masses of the people from the land forms the basis of the capitalist method of production. The essence of free colonisation, on the other hand, consists in this, that the bulk of the land is still public property, and that every settler on it can, therefore, turn part of it into his private property and individual means of production, without interfering with subsequent settlers when they wish to perform a like operation.<sup>1</sup>

This is the secret alike of the prosperity of the colonies and of the most grievous fault—their resistance to the implantation of capital. "Where land is very cheap and all men are free, where every one who so pleases can easily obtain a piece of land for himself, not only is labour very dear, as respects the labourer's share of the produce, but the difficulty is to obtain combined labour at any price."<sup>2</sup>

Seeing that in the colonies the divorce of the workers from the requisites for labour, and from their root, the land, has not yet been effected, or has been effected only here and there or only to a restricted extent, the divorce of agriculture from industry, too, has not yet occurred, and rural domestic industry has not yet been destroyed. Where, then, could a home market for capital be found? "No part of the population of America is exclusively agricultural, excepting slaves and their employers who combined capital and labour in particular works. Free Americans, who cultivate the soil, follow many other occupations. Some portion of the furniture and tools which they use is commonly made by themselves. They frequently build their own houses, and carry to market, at whatever distance, the produce of their own industry. They are spinners and weavers; they make soap and candles, as well as, in many cases, shoes and clothes for their own use. In America, the cultivation of land is often the secondary pursuit of a blacksmith, a miller, or a shopkeeper."<sup>3</sup> Among such queer customers as these, how can there be any "field of abstinence" for the capitalists?

The great beauty of capitalist production is this, that it does not merely reproduce the wage worker as a wage worker over and over again; but that, furthermore, it

<sup>1</sup> "Land to be an element of colonisation, must not only be waste but it must be public property, liable to be converted into private property." *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 21-22.

produces a relative surplus population of wage workers, in numbers proportional to the accumulation of capital. In this way the law of supply and demand is kept in perfect working order as regards labour; the oscillations of wages are restricted within the limits convenient to capitalist exploiters; and, finally, the indispensable social dependence of the worker on the capitalist is guaranteed—a relation of dependence which is absolute, but one which the political economist at home, in the motherland, can, after his mealy-mouthed fashion, falsely represent as a free contractual relation between buyers and sellers, between equally independent owners of commodities, the owners of the commodity capital and the owners of the commodity labour. In the colonies, this pretty illusion is shattered. There, absolute population increases far more quickly than in the homeland, inasmuch as many workers come into the colonial world fully grown; and nevertheless the labour market is always understocked. As far as labour is concerned, the law of supply and demand does not run. On the one hand, the old world is continually exporting to the colonies capital lusting for exploitation, greedy for the practice of “abstinence”; on the other hand, the regular reproduction of the wage worker as wage worker encounters the most unmannerly obstacles, and obstacles which are to a considerable extent insuperable. What scope is there for the production of superfluous wage workers in proportion to the accumulation of capital? The wage worker of to-day will to-morrow become an independent peasant or handicraftsman, working on his own account. When this happens, he disappears from the labour market—but not into the workhouse. This continuous transformation of wage workers into independent producers, who work for themselves instead of working for capital, and enrich themselves instead of enriching his worship the capitalist, has an injurious reaction upon the state of the labour market. Not only does the rate of the exploitation of the wage worker remain indecently low. In addition, the wage worker, since he is no longer in a relation of dependence, ceases to have any feeling of dependence as regards the abstemious capitalist. Hence all the inconveniences which our friend E. G. Wakefield picture so doughtily, so eloquently, and so touchingly.

The supply of wage labour, he complains, is neither



constant nor regular nor sufficient. "The supply of labour is always not only small but uncertain."<sup>1</sup> Again: "Though the produce divided between the capitalist and the labourer be large, the labourer takes so great a share that he soon becomes a capitalist. . . . Few, even of those whose lives are unusually long, can accumulate great masses of wealth."<sup>2</sup> The workers simply will not allow the capitalists to "abstain" from paying for the greater part of the labour performed. Nor does it avail the capitalist, should he be so shrewd as to import his own wage workers from Europe when he is importing his own capital. They soon "would have ceased . . . to be labourers for hire; they . . . would have become independent landowners, if not competitors with their former masters in the market of labour".<sup>3</sup> What a dreadful thing, is it not? The worthy capitalist has paid out his own good money merely in order to import competitors from Europe! This is the end of all things! No wonder that Wakefield laments the absence of dependence, and of any feeling of dependence, on the part of the wage workers in the colonies. His disciple, Merivale, tells us that, on account of the high wages paid in the colonies, there is an "urgent desire for cheaper and more subservient labourers—for a class to whom the capitalist might dictate terms instead of being dictated to by them. . . . In ancient civilised countries, the labourer, though free, is by law of nature dependent on capitalists; in colonies this dependence must be created by artificial means."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Merivale, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 235-314, *passim*. Even the vulgar economist Molinari, a moderate free-trader, says: "In the colonies, where slavery has been abolished but where forced labour has not been replaced by an equivalent amount of free labour, things work out in the very opposite way from that which we see realised every day under our own eyes. There we find that the ordinary workers are able, in their turn, to exploit the entrepreneurs, demanding wages out of all proportion to their proper share of the product. The planters, being unable to sell their sugar for a price sufficient to cover the increased wages, have been obliged to supply the excess, at first out of their profits, and subsequently out of their very capital. A great many planters have been ruined in this way; others have closed down their refineries in order to avoid imminent ruin. . . . No doubt one would rather see accumulations of capital dissipated than generations of men perish." [How wonderfully generous an admission on the part of Monsieur Molinari!] "But would it not be better if the capital could be kept intact and at the same time the

What, according to Wakefield, is the upshot of this unfortunate state of things in the colonies? A "barbarising tendency of dispersion" of producers and national wealth.<sup>1</sup> The dispersion of the means of production among numberless independent owners, renders the centralisation of capital impossible, and thus does away with the foundation of associated labour. Protracted undertakings, those that would take years to complete and would require the expenditure of fixed capital, are faced with insuperable obstacles. In Europe, the capitalists do not hesitate to invest in such undertakings, for the working class is an ever-ready living appurtenance, always present in excess of numbers. How different in the colonies! Wakefield tells us of a most painful experience. He had a conversation with some capitalists of Canada and of New York State, where the wave of immigration often becomes stagnant, and deposits a sediment of "supernumerary" workers. According to one of the persons of the melodrama: "Our capital was ready for many operations which require a considerable period of time for their completion; but we could not begin such operations with labour which, we knew, would soon leave us. If we have been sure of retaining the labour of such emigrants, we should have been glad to have engaged it at once, and for a high price; and we should have engaged it, even though we had been sure it would leave us, provided we had been sure of a fresh supply whenever we might need it."=

After Wakefield has thus ostentatiously contrasted English capitalist agriculture and its "combined" labour with the dispersed activities of the American peasant proprietors, he unwittingly gives us a glimpse of the reverse

men could be kept alive?" Molinari, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52. Oh, Monsieur Molinari! What has become of the Ten Commandments, of Moses and the prophets, of the law of supply and demand, if in Europe the "entrepreneur" can deprive the worker of his proper share in the product, and in the West Indies the worker can deprive the entrepreneur of his proper share? And what, if you please, is this "proper share" which, according to your own admission, the capitalist day by day fails to pay his workers? Over there in the colonies, where the workers are so "ordinary" as to exploit the capitalist, Monsieur Molinari is eager for the use of police measures to ensure the right functioning of that law of supply and demand which on our side of the world functions so automatically.

<sup>1</sup> Wakefield, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 191-192.

of the medal. He describes the common people of America as well-to-do, independent, enterprising, and comparatively well educated. On the other hand, "the peasant of the south of England suffers nearly all the evils, but enjoys none of the advantages of slavery. He is not a freeman, nor is he a slave; he is a pauper. . . . In what country, except North America and some new colonies, do the wages of free labour employed in agriculture much exceed a bare subsistence for the labourer? . . . Undoubtedly farm horses in England, being a valuable property, are better fed than English peasants."<sup>1</sup> No matter! National wealth, is once again, by its very nature, identical with the poverty of the masses.

How, then, is this anticapitalist cancer of the colonies to be cured? If people were willing, at one blow, to transform all the land from public property into private property, they would, indeed, cut the evil at its root, but therewith they would destroy the colonies. Some expedient must be found by which it will be possible to kill two birds with the one stone. Let the government put an artificially high price upon virgin soil, a price independent of the law of supply and demand, a price so high that the immigrant will have to work for a long time before he can earn enough money to buy land,<sup>2</sup> and before he can in this way transform himself into an independent farmer. By thus selling land at a price which makes its purchase practically impossible for the wage workers, by thus extorting money from the wages of labour through a violation of the sacred law of supply and demand, the government will create a fund, which, as it grows, is to be used in order to import impecunious persons from Europe into the colonies, and thus keep the labour market well stocked for the capitalists. Then all will be for the best in the best of all possible worlds. This is the great secret of "systematic colonisation". By this

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 47 and 246.

<sup>2</sup> "You add, then, that it is thanks to the private ownership of the land and of capital that the man who has nothing but his hands can find work and earn a living. . . . I tell you, on the contrary, that it is thanks to the private ownership of the land that there exist men who have nothing but their hands. . . . When you put a man into a vacuum, you cut him off from the air. What else are you doing when you take possession of the land? . . . You put him into a vacuum from which wealth has been exhausted, so that he may only be able to live at your sweet will and pleasure." Colins, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 268-271, *passim*.

plan, Wakefield triumphantly exclaims: "The supply of labour must be constant and regular, because first, as no labourer would be able to procure land until he had worked for money, all immigrant labourers working for a time for wages and in combination, would produce capital for the employment of more labourers; secondly, because every labourer who left off working for wages and became a landowner, would, by purchasing land, provide a fund for bringing fresh labour to the colony."<sup>1</sup> The price fixed upon land by the State must, of course, be a "sufficient price", this meaning that it must be high enough "to prevent the labourers from becoming independent landowners until others had followed to take their place".<sup>2</sup> This "sufficient price" is a euphemism for the ransom which the worker is to pay the capitalist for permission to retire from the labour market to the land. Before he can get leave, the worker must create "capital" wherewith his worship the capitalist can exploit more workers; and, at his own expense, the worker must provide a "substitute" in the labour market, one whom the government will ship across the sea for the advantage of his quondam master the capitalist.

It is extremely characteristic that the English government should for years have practised this method of "primary accumulation" which Mr. Wakefield advocates expressly for the use of the colonies. The fiasco was, of course, as complete as that of Sir Robert Peel's Bank Act. The only result was to divert the stream of emigration from the English colonies to the United States. Meanwhile, the advance of capitalist production in Europe, to the accompaniment of increasing governmental pressure, has rendered Wakefield's recipe superfluous. On the one hand, the vast and unceasing stream of human beings pouring into America year after year leaves behind it a stationary sediment in the eastern States of the American Union; for the flood of emigration from Europe throws men on the American labour market more rapidly than the current of emigration from the eastern States to the western can carry them onward. On the other hand, the American Civil War has left behind it a colossal national debt, with the consequent increased pressure of taxation, the creation of a financial aristocracy of the meanest kind, the handing

<sup>1</sup> Wakefield, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 45.

over of an enormous proportion of the public lands to speculative companies for exploitation by means of railways, mines, etc.—in a word, the centralisation of capital at a headlong pace. No longer is the great republic the promised land for emigrants. Capitalist production is there advancing with giant strides. Although the wages of the workers have not yet been forced down to the European level, and the wage workers there are not yet so dependent as in Europe, the shameless squandering of uncultivated colonial land upon aristocrats and capitalists, this behaviour of the government which even Wakefield loudly denounces, has led, especially in Australia<sup>1</sup> (in conjunction with the flow of adventurers to the gold diggings and with competition which the import of English commodities exerts as against the petty handicraftsmen), to a sufficiently large “relative surplus population”, so that almost every mail brings jeremiads concerning the “glut of the Australian labour market”, and prostitution is flourishing at the antipodes almost as luxuriantly as in the London Haymarket.

Here, however, we are not concerned with colonial conditions. The only thing that interests us is that the political economy of the old world has discovered in the new world, and has then proclaimed on the housetops, a great secret: that the capitalist method of production and accumulation, in short, capitalist private property, demands as its fundamental condition the annihilation of self-earned private property; in other words, the expropriation of the worker.

<sup>1</sup> Of course, as soon as Australia became her own law-giver, the colonial government passed laws favourable to the settlers, but the prior squandering of the land by the English government has proved a hindrance to their effective working. “The first and main object at which the new Land Act of 1862 aims, is to give increased facilities for the settlement of the people.” *The Land Law of Victoria*, by the Hon. G. Duffy, minister of public lands, London, 1862.

## APPENDIXES



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST GERMAN EDITION

THIS work, the first volume of which I now submit to the public, is a continuation of my *Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, published in 1859. The long pause between the opening and the continuation is due to a lengthy illness, which interrupted my work again and again.

The contents of the before-mentioned work are summarised in the opening chapter of the present volume. There were other reasons for taking this course besides the need for a connected and complete treatment of the subject. The exposition has been improved. As far as the nature of the subject matter rendered it possible, many points that were merely alluded to in the earlier work have been more comprehensively treated in the present one, whereas certain matters treated in detail there find no more than cursory mention here. Of course, the parts dealing with the history of the theory of value and with the theory of money, find no place in this work. Still, the reader of my earlier book will find in the notes to Chapter One of the present volume new sources of reference relating to the history of those theories.

The saying that all beginnings are difficult applies to every science. Consequently, the chief difficulties my readers will experience will be found in the first chapter, and especially in that portion of it which contains the analysis of commodities. As regards the analysis of the substance of value and that of the magnitude of value, I have written in as popular a strain as possible.\* The value

\* This seemed all the more necessary, seeing that even the section of Ferdinand Lassalle's polemic against Schulze-Delitzsch, in which he professes to give "the intellectual quintessence" of my discussion of these themes, contains serious misunderstandings.—In passing I should like to say that if Lassalle has thought fit to borrow from my works (almost word for word, but without acknowledgment) all the chief theoretical propositions in his economic writings, such as the thesis concerning the historical character of capital, that concerning the connexion between relations of production and method of production, etc., etc., this was doubtless done for propaganda purposes. Naturally I am not speaking of his applications of these theories to matters of detail with which I have nothing to do.



form (whose complete expression is the money form) is simple and elementary. Nevertheless, the human mind has been vainly trying to fathom it for more than two thousand years, although the analysis of forms that are far more complicated and far more closely packed with meaning has offered comparatively little difficulty. Why is this? Because the complete organism is easier to study than are its constituent cells. Furthermore, when you come to the analysis of economic forms, we have neither microscope nor chemical reagents to help us out. The power of abstraction has to take the place of both these expedients. Now, as far as bourgeois society is concerned, the commodity form of the products of labour, or the value form of commodities, represents the form of the economic unitary cell. To the uninitiated, such analysis seems to turn upon hair-splitting. It is quite true that we are concerned here with minutiae, just as we are concerned with minutiae when we study histology, the microscopic anatomy of the tissues.

Except, however, as regards the subsections of Chapter One which deal with the form of value, the reader of this book will have no reason to complain that it is difficult to understand. When I say this, I am naturally assuming that its readers will want to learn something new, will be willing to do some thinking on their own account.

The physicist pursues his investigations, either by studying natural processes where they manifest themselves in the most pregnant forms, and where they are obscured as little as possible by disturbing influences; or else, whenever he can, he performs experiments under conditions which ensure that the process he is watching shall run an uncomplicated course. The subject of study in the present work is the capitalist method of production, and the relations of production and exchange appropriate to that method. The region where these relations have hitherto assumed their most typical aspects, is England. That is why English conditions have been mainly drawn upon in illustration of my theoretical disquisitions. Should, however, the German reader be disposed to shrug his shoulders pharisaically when he contemplates the conditions under which the English industrial and agricultural workers live and perform their daily tasks, or if he should be inclined in optimistic mood to congratulate himself with the belief that things are far from being so bad in Germany, I must assure him:

"De te fabula narratur." [The story is told about you; i.e., the cap fits.]

What we are concerned with primarily is, not the higher or the lower degree of development of the social antagonisms which arise out of the natural laws of capitalist production, but these laws in themselves, the tendencies which work out with an iron necessity towards an inevitable goal. A country in which industrial development is more advanced than in others, simply presents those others with a picture of their own future.

Apart from the foregoing considerations, where capitalist methods of production have already struck firm root in Germany (as in the factories proper), conditions are much worse than in England, seeing that in Germany the counterpoise of the Factory Acts is lacking. In other domains, Germany, like the rest of western continental Europe, suffers, not only from the development of capitalist production, but also from the backwardness of its development. Side by side with the troubles peculiar to modern life, we have in Germany a number of troubles handed down from the past, the outcome of the pursuance of antiquated methods of production, with their train of anachronistic social and political conditions. We suffer, not only from the living, but also from the dead. *Le mort saisit le vif!* [The dead encumber the living.]

In comparison with the social statistics of Britain, those of Germany and the rest of western continental Europe are wretchedly compiled. Still, they lift the veil sufficiently to give a glimpse of the Gorgon's head behind it. We Germans would be terrified at the conditions that prevail in our own country if our governments and parliaments were (like England) periodically to appoint commissions of enquiry into economic conditions; if these commissions were endowed with the same ample powers as in England to enable them to search out the truth; if it were possible to find in Germany men as competent and as free from bias and from respect of persons, as are the British factory inspectors, the British medical reporters on public health, the British commissioners of enquiry into the exploitation of women and children, into housing conditions, food supply, etc. Perseus wore a magic cap that made him invisible when he was hunting down monsters. We draw a cap tightly over our own eyes and ears, that we may

have warrant for denying the existence of any monsters at all.

Let us not deceive ourselves. Just as the American War of Independence in the eighteenth century sounded the tocsin for the middle classes of Europe, so the American Civil War in the nineteenth century has sounded the tocsin for the European working class. In England, the revolutionary process is plain to all who have eyes to see. When it reaches a certain intensity, it will necessarily react upon the Continent. There it will take a more brutal or a more humane form, according as the development of the working class itself varies. To say nothing of higher motives, the present ruling class will find it to its own interest to sweep away all the legally removable hindrances that interfere with the free development of the working class. That is one of the reasons why I have given so much space in the present work to a study of the history, the nature, and the results of British factory legislation. One nation can learn from others, and should do so. When a society has discovered the natural laws which regulate its own movement (and the final purpose of my book is to reveal the economic law of motion of modern society), it can neither overleap the natural phases of evolution, nor shuffle them out of the world by decrees. But this much, at least, it can do; it can shorten and lessen the birth-pangs.

One word more to avert misunderstandings. The persons of capitalists and landowners are not, in my book, depicted in rose-tinted colours; but if I speak of individuals, it is only in so far as they are personifications of economic categories, representatives of special class relations and class interests. Inasmuch as I conceive the development of the economic structure of society to be a natural process, I should be the last to hold the individual responsible for conditions whose creature he himself is, socially considered, however much he may raise himself above them subjectively.

In the domain of political economy, free scientific enquiry has its special enemies to encounter besides those who are met with on all other fields. The peculiar quality of its subject matter calls to arms against it the most violent, the most petty, and the most odious passions of the human heart—the furies of private interest. For instance, the Anglican Church will more readily pardon attacks upon thirty-eight of its thirty-nine articles, than upon one

thirty-ninth of its income. To-day, even atheism is a venial sin as compared with the criticism of traditional property relations. Still, progress is undeniable. During the last few weeks there has been published a Blue Book entitled *Correspondence with Her Majesty's Missions Abroad regarding Industrial Questions and Trades' Unions*. The foreign representatives of the British crown tell us here, in plain words, that in Germany, France, in a word all the more advanced lands of the European continent, a change in the extant relations between capital and labour is just as obvious and just as inevitable as in England. Simultaneously there comes a voice from across the Atlantic, that of Mr. Wade, the vice-president of the United States of North America, who declares at public meetings that, after the abolition of slavery, a radical change in the conditions of capital and landed property comes next on the agenda! These are signs of the times, which can be hidden neither by purple mantles nor by black cassocks. They do not signify that miracles will happen to-morrow. Still, they do show that even the ruling classes are beginning to realise that contemporary society is not a solid crystal, but an organism capable of changing, and continually undergoing change.

The second volume of this work will deal with the circulation of capital (Book Two) and the varied forms assumed by capital in the general course of its development (Book Three). In a third and concluding volume (Book Four) I shall discuss the history of the theory.

I am ready to welcome scientific criticism. As far as concerns the prejudices of what is termed public opinion, to which I have never made any concessions, I shall continue to guide myself by the maxim of the great Florentine:

Sequi il tuo corso, e lascia dir le genti! †

KARL MARX

London, July, 25, 1867

† [Follow your own bent, no matter what people say.]

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND GERMAN EDITION

Down to the present time political economy has, in Germany, been a foreign science. In his *Geschichtliche Darstellung des Handels, der Gewerbe*, etc., and especially in the first two volumes published in 1830, Gustav von Gülich has discussed the historical circumstances which have hindered the development of the capitalist method of production in Germany, and have therefore hindered the appearance of modern bourgeois society in that country. Thus the living soil in which political economy grows was lacking in Germany. Economic science was imported ready-made from England and France. The German professors of economics remained pupils. In their hands the theoretical exposition of what was reality in foreign parts, became a mere collection of dogmas, which were interpreted by them in the light of the petty-bourgeois world they knew, and were therefore misinterpreted. They could not wholly repress a sense of scientific impotence, and their consciences were uneasy because they had to hold forth upon a subject which was really foreign to them, so they tried to conceal their discomfort, either by a parade of literary and historical erudition, or else by the admixture of alien material borrowed from the so-called cameralistic or fiscal sciences—a mish-mash of knowledge through whose purgatorial fires the unhappy candidate for a post in the German bureaucracy has to pass.

Since 1848, capitalist production has been developing rapidly in Germany, and is now in a phase of mushroom growth. But fate remains unkind to our economic experts. In the days when they could still study and expound political economy without prejudice, modern economic conditions did not exist upon German soil. When these conditions began to appear in Germany, it happened in circumstances which made their unprejudiced study no longer possible within the bounds of the bourgeois horizon. In so far as political economy is bourgeois (that is to say in so far as it regards the capitalist system, not as a transitory

phase of historical development, but as the absolute and final form of social production), it can only remain a science as long as the class struggle is still latent, or manifests itself exclusively in the shape of isolated phenomena.

Look at England, for instance. The classical political economy of that country belongs to the period when the class struggle was still undeveloped. Ricardo the last of the great exponents of the classical political economy, at length, and consciously, made the conflict of class interests, the antagonism between wages and profits and between profits and land-rents, the starting-point of his investigations, while naively conceiving these antagonisms to be a social law of nature. Thereupon, bourgeois political economy had reached an insuperable barrier. Even while Ricardo was still living, and in opposition to him, it had to encounter the criticism of Sismondi.\*

The succeeding period, from 1820 to 1830, was notable in England for scientific activity in the domain of political economy. This was the period during which the Ricardian theory was being vulgarised and diffused, the period when that theory was at war with the theories of the old school. Splendid tournaments were held. Not much about the matter became known on the Continent, for the disputes were mainly carried on in review articles, occasional literature, and pamphlets. The unprejudiced character of this controversy (although the Ricardian theory was, in exceptional cases, already being used as a weapon of attack upon bourgeois economics) is explicable out of the circumstances of the time. On the one hand, large-scale industry itself was only emerging from its childhood. This we can see from the fact that the cyclical character of the life of modern industry only began to become apparent with the crisis of 1825. On the other hand, the class struggle between capital and labour was forced into the background: politically, by the fight between the governments and the feudalists grouped round the Holy Alliance, as one of the contending parties, and the mass of the people led by the bourgeoisie, as the other; economically, by the feud between industrial capital and aristocratic landed property, which in France was masked by the conflict between small-scale and large-scale landed property, but in England broke out into open warfare upon the question of the Corn Laws. The literature

\* See my *Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, p. 39.

of political economy in England during this epoch reminds us of the storm-and-stress period in French economic science after the death of Dr. Quesnay, though only as an Indian summer reminds us of spring. With the year 1830, came the decisive crisis.

Both in France and in England, the bourgeoisie had won to political power. Thenceforward the class struggle, both practical and theoretical, assumed more open and threatening forms. It sounded the death knell of bourgeois political economy. The economists no longer asked whether this or that theory was true, but whether it was useful or harmful to capital, convenient or inconvenient, politically dangerous or safe. Paid prizefighters took the place of disinterested investigators; evil consciences and maleficent apologetics took the place of unprejudiced scientific research. Still, even the pamphlets which the Anti-Corn-Law League, with the manufacturers Cobden and Bright at its head, showered into the world, had a historical if not a scientific interest, thanks to their polemic against the landed aristocracy. Since then, however, free-trade legislation, introduced by Sir Robert Peel, has deprived vulgar political economy of even this last sting.

The revolution of 1848 on the continent of Europe likewise had its repercussions in England. Men who still had a claim to scientific repute, and who wanted to be something more than sophists and sycophants of the ruling classes, tried to harmonise capitalist political economy with the claims of the proletariat (claims that could no longer be ignored). The result was a shallow syncretism, of which John Stuart Mill is the most conspicuous representative. This is a declaration of bankruptcy on the part of bourgeois economics, as the great Russian scholar and critic Chernyshevsky has admirably shown in his [*Outlines of Political Economy according to Mill*].

So it happened that in Germany the capitalist method of production did not come to maturity until the conflicts within its being had been conspicuously manifested both in France and Britain by struggles that made a noise in history; and when the German proletariat already possessed a much more developed theoretical class consciousness than did the German bourgeoisie. The upshot was that by the time the development of a bourgeois science of political economy seemed to have become possible in

Germany, circumstances had already made its development impossible.

In these conditions, its champions fell into two groups. Some of them, prudent, industrious, and practical people, rallied round the standard of Bastiat, the most superficial and therefore the most successful exponent of vulgar economic apologetics; others, proud of the academic dignity of their science, followed John Stuart Mill in the attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. During the decay of bourgeois political economy in Germany, just as during the classical age of that science in their country, the Germans were never anything more than pupils, imitators, and followers—petty traders in the service of the great foreign wholesale concern.

Thus the peculiar historical evolution of German society prevented any original development of "bourgeois" economics; but not the criticism of bourgeois economics. In so far as such criticism can be said to represent the views of a class, it can only represent the class whose historical mission it is to overthrow the capitalist method of production, and ultimately to abolish classes. It can only represent the views of the proletariat.

The learned and the unlearned spokesmen of the German bourgeoisie began by maintaining a strict silence about *Das Kapital*, just as they had about my earlier writings. As soon as these tactics became obviously unsuitable to the conditions of the day, they set to work (under the pretext of criticising my book) upon the writing of prescriptions "for the tranquillisation of the bourgeois mind"; but in the working-class press they found writers to outmatch them there—see, for instance, Joseph Dietzgen's articles in the "Volksstaat"—and the world is still awaiting their rejoinders.<sup>1</sup> An excellent Russian translation of *Das Kapital*

<sup>1</sup> The mealy-mouthed babblers of German vulgar economics complained of the style of my book, and of its mode of exposition. No one can feel more strongly than I do how great are the literary shortcomings of *Das Kapital*. Nevertheless, for the use and pleasure of these gentlemen and their reading public, I will quote here one English and one Russian notice of my book. The "Saturday Review", though absolutely opposed to my opinions, said of the first German edition: "The presentation of the subject invests the driest economic questions with a certain peculiar charm." The "St. Petersburg Journal" in its issue of April 20, 1872, says: "The presentation of the subject, except for one or two highly technical parts, is distinguished



was published at St. Petersburg in the spring of 1872. The edition of three thousand copies is now almost sold out. As early as 1871, N. Ziber, professor of political economy in the university of Kiev, had, in his work on Ricardo's theory of value and of capital, referred to my theory of value, money, and capital, as, in its elements, the logical continuation of the theory of Smith and Ricardo. The western European reader of Ziber's excellent work cannot but be astonished at the author's consistent and firm grasp of the purely theoretical position.

Speaking generally, the method employed in *Das Kapital* has been little understood, as we can see from the contradictory opinions that have been uttered concerning the book.

For instance, the "Revue Positiviste" reproaches me for having treated economics metaphysically; and, on the other hand, it declares (wonderful to relate) that I confine myself to a critical dismemberment of the actual, instead of writing recipes (Comtist recipes, presumably) for the cookshops of the future. As regards the charge that I am metaphysical, Professor Ziber remarks: "In so far as it deals with pure theory, the method of Marx is the deductive method characteristic of the whole English school, whose defects and merits are common to the best economic theoreticians." Monsieur M. Block (*Les théoriciens du socialisme en Allemagne*, an extract from "Journal des Économistes", July and August 1872) discovers that my method is analytical, and goes on to say: "Thanks to this work, Marx must be classed among the most noted analytical minds." The German reviewers, as was to be expected, shrieked at my Hegelian sophistications. The "European Messenger" of St. Petersburg, in an article dealing exclusively with the method of *Das Kapital* (see the May issue of 1872, pp. 427-436), declares that my method of investigation is strictly realist, but that my method of presentation is unfortunately of the German dialectic type. The writer

by its comprehensibility to the general reader, by its clearness, and (in spite of the scientific intricacy of the subject) by an unusual liveliness. In this respect the author . . . is very different from the majority of German scholars, who . . . write their books in a language so dry and so obscure that the heads of ordinary mortals are split by it." It is not only the heads of the readers of contemporary German national liberal professorial literature that are split!

goes on to say: "At the first glance, if we judge in accordance with the outward form of the presentation, we come to the conclusion that the author is one of the greatest among idealist philosophers, in the German, that is to say the bad sense, of the word 'idealist'. But in actual fact he is enormously more realist than any of his predecessors in the sphere of economic criticism. . . . He can in no sense be called an idealist." I cannot answer the writer more effectively than with the aid of a few extracts from his own criticism, which may interest some of my readers to whom the Russian original is inaccessible. After quoting pp. iv-vii from the preface to my *Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, Berlin, 1859, in which I set forth the materialist foundation of my method, the writer continues as follows: "For Marx, only one thing is important: to discover the laws of the phenomena he is investigating. He is not interested only in the law which controls them in so far as they have a finished form and a mutual connexion within a definite historical period. He is still more interested in the law of their change, their evolution, that is to say the transition from one form to another, from one series of relations into a different one. As soon as he has discovered this law, he proceeds to work out in detail the effects as manifested in social life. . . . Consequently, Marx troubles himself about one thing only: to demonstrate, by means of exact scientific study, the necessity of definite and orderly successions in social relations, and, so far as possible, to give a perfectly correct statement of the facts which serve for the foundation and the support of his views. For this purpose, it is quite enough that, when demonstrating the necessity of the present order of society, he should simultaneously demonstrate the necessity of a different order into which the present order must inevitably pass, no matter whether human beings believe this or do not believe it, no matter whether they are aware of it or unaware of it. Marx regards the social movement as a natural process, guided by laws which are not merely independent of the will, the consciousness, and the purposes of men, but, conversely, determine their will, their consciousness, and their purposes. . . . If the conscious element plays a subordinate part in the history of civilisation, it is obvious that a critical enquiry whose subject matter is civilisation can, less than anything else, have for its basis any form

or any result of consciousness. This means that the starting-point of the enquiry must be, not the idea, but only the external phenomenon. The criticism will confine itself to the comparison and confronting of a fact, not with an idea, but with another fact. For this enquiry, what really matters is that both the facts shall be studied as accurately as possible; and that, as confronted with one another, they shall really constitute different evolutionary factors: and most important of all is it that there should be an accurate analysis of the sequences and the connexions out of which the stages of evolution are made up. But, we shall be told, the general laws of economic life are always one and the same, whether these laws are applied to the present or to the past. This is the very thing that Marx denies. According to him there are no such abstract laws. . . . In his opinion, every historical period has laws peculiar to itself. . . . As soon as life has passed through a given period of evolution, and is moving on from one stage to another, it begins to be subjected to the guidance of new laws. In a word, economic life goes through an evolutionary history resembling that with which we are familiar in other domains of biology. . . . The earlier economists misunderstood the nature of economic laws when they compared them with the laws of physics and chemistry. . . . A profounder analysis of the phenomena has shown that social organisms differ from one another as fundamentally as do vegetable and animal organisms. . . . Nay more, one and the same phenomenon is subject to quite different laws in different social organisms, because the general structure of these organisms differs, because their individual organs vary, because these organs function under different conditions, and so on. For instance, Marx denies that the law of population is the same at all times and in all places. He contends that every evolutionary phase has its own law of population. . . . As productivity develops, social conditions and the laws governing them change. Since it is Marx's aim to study and elucidate the capitalist economic order from this standpoint, he is satisfied to formulate in strictly scientific terms the purpose which every precise study of economic life must have. . . . The scientific value of such an investigation lies in the disclosure of the special laws that regulate the origin, existence, development, and death of a given social organism, and its replacement

by another and a higher one. Such, in fact, is the value of Marx's book."

When the writer describes so aptly, and (so far as my personal application of it goes) so generously, the method I have actually used, what else is he describing but the dialectic method?

Of course the method of presentation must differ formally from the method of investigation. The aim of investigation is to appropriate the matter in detail, to analyse its various developmental forms, and to trace the inner connexions between these forms. Not until this preliminary work has been effected, can the movement as it really is be suitably described. If the description prove successful, if the life of the subject matter be reflected on the ideal plane, then it may appear as if we had before us nothing more than an *apriori* construction.

My own dialectical method is not only fundamentally different from the Hegelian dialectical method, but is its direct opposite. For Hegel, the thought process (which he actually transforms into an independent subject, giving to it the name of "idea") is the demiurge [creator] of the real; and for him the real is only the outward manifestation of the idea. In my view, on the other hand, the ideal is nothing other than the material when it has been transposed and translated inside the human head.

Nearly thirty years ago, when Hegelianism was still fashionable, I criticised the mystifying aspect of the Hegelian dialectic. But at the very time when I was working at the first volume of *Das Kapital*, the peevish and arrogant mediocrities who nowadays have the ear of the educated public in Germany, were fond of treating Hegel much as in Lessing's day the world of Moses Mendelssohn used to treat Spinoza, namely as a "dead dog". That was why I frankly proclaimed myself a disciple of that great thinker, and even, in *Das Kapital*, toyed with the use of Hegelian terminology when discussing the theory of value. Although in Hegel's hands dialectic underwent a mystification, this does not obviate the fact that he was the first to expound the general forms of its movement in a comprehensive and fully conscious way. In Hegel's writings, dialectic stands on its head. You must turn it right way up again if you want to discover the rational kernel that is hidden away within the wrappings of mystification.

In its mystified form, dialectic became the fashion in Germany because it seemed to elucidate the existing state of affairs. In its rational form it is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen, because, while supplying a positive understanding of the existing state of things, it at the same time furnishes an understanding of the negation of that state of things, and enables us to recognise that that state of things will inevitably break up; it is an abomination to them because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, as transient; because it lets nothing overawe it, but is in its very nature critical and revolutionary.

The contradictions inherent in the movement of capitalist society are most conspicuous to the practical bourgeois in the vicissitudes of the periodic cycles to which modern industry is subject, and in the culminating point of these cycles, a universal crisis. Such a crisis is once more approaching, although as yet in its preliminary stages. By its universality and its intensity, it will drum dialectics into the heads even of the upstarts of the New, Holy, Prussian-German Empire.

KARL MARX

London, January 24, 1873

## ENGELS' PREFACE TO THE THIRD GERMAN EDITION

MARX could not enjoy the pleasure of preparing this third edition for the press. That mighty thinker, before whose greatness even his opponents are at length willing to bow, died on March 14, 1883.

Upon me, who lost in him a friend of forty years' standing, the best and truest of friends, the friend to whom I owe more than words can possibly express—upon me devolved the task of preparing this third edition for the press, as well as the task of dealing with the manuscript materials awaiting publication as a second volume. Here it behoves me to tell the reader how I have fulfilled the former duty.

Marx had it in mind to undertake a thorough revision of the present volume, to clarify many of the theoretical discussions it contains, to add new matter, to supplement the historical and statistical material by bringing it up to date. His illness, and his urgent wish to complete the second volume, made him abandon the idea. Nothing but absolutely essential alterations were to be made, nor any additions except those which are already to be found in the French translation. (*Le Capital*, Lachâtre, Paris, 1873.)

Among his papers I found a German copy which had been corrected here and there, and contained cross references to the French edition. There was also a copy of the French version, in which he had carefully marked the passages that were to be used. With few exceptions, these emendations and additions are confined to the concluding part of the book, the one that deals with the process of the accumulation of capital. Up till now, this part of the text has been more closely accordant with the original draft, whereas the earlier parts had undergone a more thorough elaboration. Consequently, the style was more vivid and more harmonious; but it was also more negligent, interspersed with Anglicisms, and sometimes ambiguous. There were occasional gaps in the argument, for certain important matters received no more than allusive treatment.

As regards the style, Marx had himself thoroughly

revised some of the subsections, and in those, as well as in numerous conversations, he had set me a standard showing how far I could go in the removal of technical English expressions and other Anglicisms. The emendations and additions had also been personally elaborated by Marx, and the smooth French had been replaced by his own terse German. All I had to do was to insert them in the original text almost exactly as they were.

Thus in this third edition not a word has been altered except in cases where I definitely know that the author would himself have made the alteration. Naturally I should never dream of introducing into *Das Kapital* the current jargon in which German economists are accustomed to express their views—the gibberish in which, for instance, the man who pays ready cash to others in return for their work is spoken of as “*der Arbeitgeber*” (the work-giver), while the man whose work is taken away from him in exchange for wages is called “*der Arbeitnehmer*” (the work-taker). In French, too, “*travail*” is used in ordinary life in the sense of “occupation”. But a Frenchman would rightly regard as insane the economist who should propose to call a capitalist a “*donneur de travail*” and a worker a “*receveur de travail*”.

Moreover, since English weights and measures are used almost without exception in the text, and prices, etc., are stated in British currency, I have not ventured to reduce these to their German equivalents. When the first edition of *Das Kapital* was published, there existed in Germany as many varieties of weights and measures as there are days in the year; there were two kinds of mark (the Reichsmark then existed only in the head of Soetbeer, who invented it in the end of the thirties), two kinds of gulden, and at least three kinds of taler, one of these last being represented by the new florin. In the field of natural science, the metric system was used; whilst in the world market, British weights and measures were the standard. In such circumstances, it was obvious that British weights and measures must be used in a book which was compelled to draw its facts almost exclusively from British industrial instances. The same reason is still operative to-day, seeing that the conditions prevailing in the world market have scarcely altered in this respect since *Das Kapital* was written, so that in the iron trade and in the cotton trade (the two most

important industries) British weights and measures are still almost exclusively employed.

Finally, I must say a word about Marx's method of quotation, which is little understood. As far as facts and descriptions are concerned, the quotations (such as those from the British Blue Books) manifestly speak for themselves as authorities. The case is different when we come to the theoretical views of other economists quoted by Marx. Here the object of the quotation is merely to indicate where, when, and by whom, in the course of the evolution of economic theory, a particular economic idea first secured clear expression. All that Marx wants to show is that the economic idea in question is important in the history of the science, that it is a more or less adequate theoretical expression of the economic situation of its time. It does not matter to him whether the idea is, from his own standpoint, still absolutely or relatively valid, or whether it has now fallen into decay. Thus these quotations form nothing more than a running commentary on the text, a commentary drawn from the history of economic science; and they present the various important advances of economic theory in association with their dates and their originators. To do this was essential in the case of a science whose historiographers have hitherto been characterised only by a tendentious, almost pushful ignorance. Readers, therefore, will readily understand why Marx, in conformity with what was said in the preface to the second edition, seldom alludes to German economists.

It is to be hoped that the second volume will be ready for publication in the course of the year 1884.

FRIEDRICH ENGELS

London, November 7, 1883



## ENGELS' PREFACE TO THE FOURTH GERMAN EDITION

THIS fourth edition has been revised by me in a way designed to give the text and footnotes, as far as possible, a definitive form. Let me give a brief explanation of the way in which I have carried out my task.

After referring once more to the French edition and to Marx's manuscript notes, I have made a few additions to the German text. These will be found on p. 80 [English text, p. 95], pp. 458-460 [532-535], pp. 547-551 [641-646], pp. 591-593 [692-694], and the note on p. 596 [697]. Also, following the example set by the French and the English versions, I had incorporated into the text the long note concerning the mine workers (English text, pp. 535-543). Other trifling changes are of a purely technical nature.

I have also added a few explanatory notes, especially in cases where a change in historical conditions seemed to render this necessary. All these additional notes have been bracketed, and are signed by me as editor.

A complete revision of the numerous quotations had been rendered necessary by the publication of the English translation. Marx's youngest daughter, Eleanor, undertook the task of comparing, for that English translation, all the quotations with the original works, so that the quotations from English sources (which form the great majority) are not retranlations from the German, but are given in the original English. I had, therefore, to consult the English edition when preparing this fourth edition, and thus my attention was drawn to many small inaccuracies. Page numbers were wrongly given, the mistake having either arisen out of a copyist's error, or from a misprint in one or other of the previous editions. The quotation marks, and the dots indicating omissions, were not always correctly placed, mistakes of this kind being unavoidable in the copying of numerous quotations out of notebooks. Here and there, I came across injudicious German translations. Some of the passages were taken from Marx's old manuscript books dating from the years 1843-1845, before he had learned

English, and when he still read the English economists in French translations. Such retranslation from the French had led, sometimes, to slight misunderstandings (for instance in quotations from Steuart, Ure, and others), so that a fresh reference to the English texts had become necessary. Numerous such minor inaccuracies and inadvertencies have been corrected. Any one who takes the trouble to compare the fourth edition with the earlier ones, will, however, see that the laborious process of rectification has not modified any of the essential contents of the work. There is only one quotation which it has not been possible to trace, the one from Richard Jones, on p. 562 of the fourth edition (see English text, p. 658, note 2). Presumably Marx made a mistake in transcribing the title of the book. All the other quotations retain their full demonstrative force; and, indeed, their force has been increased now that they are given with perfect accuracy. In this connexion I must return to an old story.

I know of only one instance in which the accuracy of a quotation made by Marx has been disputed. Since the matter has continued to reverberate after Marx's death, I cannot well avoid mentioning it.

On March 7th, 1872, there appeared in "Concordia", published in Berlin, the organ of the German Manufacturers' Association, an anonymous article entitled: "How Karl Marx quotes." Herein, with a superfluity of moral indignation and of unparliamentary expressions, the writer avers that Marx falsified a quotation from Gladstone's budget speech of April 16, 1863. (The quotation was made in the inaugural *Address* of the International Workingmen's Association, and again in *Das Kapital*, on p. 617 of the fourth Germany edition [p. 721 of the present English translation].) The words in dispute run: "This intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power . . . entirely confined to classes of property." The anonymous critic says that they were not contained in the *Hansard* shorthand report, which is a semi-official report. He declares: "This statement is not to be found anywhere in Gladstone's speech. Gladstone says the precise opposite. *Marx has formally and materially falsified by adding this sentence.*" Marx, to whom the relevant number of "Concordia" was sent in the following May, answered his anonymous critic in the "Volksstaat"

of June 1st. Since he could no longer recall from which newspaper he had quoted the report of the speech, he was content to show that the words in question were to be found in two English newspapers of the day, and he went on to quote the "Times" report, according to which Gladstone spoke as follows: "That is the state of the case as regards the wealth of this country. I must say for one, I should look almost with apprehension and with pain upon this intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power, if it were my belief that it was confined to classes who are in easy circumstances. This takes no cognizance at all of the condition of the labouring population. The augmentation I have described and which is founded, I think, upon accurate returns, is an augmentation entirely confined to classes of property."

We see then, that Gladstone says he would be sorry if it were so, but that it actually is so. He says that the intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power is entirely confined to the propertied classes. As far as the semi-official *Hansard* report is concerned, Marx goes on to say: "In the subsequent touching up of his speech for publication, Mr. Gladstone thought it better to eliminate a passage which would have seemed unduly compromising in the mouth of the British Chancellor of the Exchequer. Such action is a traditional parliamentary usage in Britain, and was not first invented by Lasker in order to get the better of Bebel."

Thereupon the anonymous critic became more angry than ever. Brushing aside second-hand sources, in his reply in "Concordia," under date July 4th, he modestly declares that the "usual custom" is to quote parliamentary speeches from the shorthand reports; but, he goes on to say, the "Times" report (the one containing the sentence "falsely added by Marx") and the *Hansard* report (where the sentence in dispute is lacking) "are materially identical"; furthermore, the "Times" report contains "the direct opposite of what the notorious passage in the inaugural *Address* implies". The critic is careful to refrain from saying that the "Times" report contains, not only the alleged "opposite", but also the "notorious passage!" Nevertheless, he feels that he is in a tight place, and that only a new trick can save him. While, therefore, he adorns his article (which, as I have shown, is full of "insolent mendacity") with such

epithets as "bad faith", "dishonesty", "lying quotation", "impudent untruth", "a quotation that was completely falsified", "this falsification", "simply infamous", etc., he thinks it expedient to shift the discussion to a new ground, and he therefore promises that "in another article" he will show "what interpretation we place upon the phrase used by Gladstone". As though his opinion had anything to do with the matter! However, the promised additional article appeared in "Concordia" of July 11th.

Marx published a rejoinder in the "Volksstaat" of August 7th, quoting there the reports of Gladstone's speech that had appeared in the "Morning Star" and the "Morning Advertiser" of April 17, 1863. According to both of these newspapers, Gladstone had said that he would look with apprehension, etc., upon this intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power, if it were confined to classes in easy circumstances. But, he said, the augmentation actually was "entirely confined to classes possessed of property". Both of these papers, therefore, contain the "added lie" word for word. Marx furthermore showed, by comparing the "Times" report with the *Hansard* report, that the sentence which appeared in the reports of three independent newspapers published the morning after the speech was made, the sentence which three practically identical reports showed to have been actually uttered, was lacking in the subsequently touched-up *Hansard* report; so that Gladstone, as Marx declared, must have "subsequently eliminated" this sentence. In conclusion, Marx said that he had no time to carry the argument with his anonymous critic any further. We may suppose that the critic, too, had had enough of the dispute. At any rate no more issues of "Concordia" were sent to Marx.

Thus the matter seemed dead and buried. It is true that from time to time certain persons who were in touch with the University of Cambridge dropped hints as to mysterious rumours that were current there concerning an unspeakable literary crime committed by Marx in *Das Kapital*. But, despite all our enquiries, nothing definite could be ascertained. Then, on November 29, 1883, eight months after Marx's death, there appeared in the "Times" a letter dated from Trinity College, Cambridge, and signed by Sedley Taylor, in which this pygmy, a dabbler in the tamest of cooperative enterprises, at last condescended to throw a

certain amount of light, not only upon the gossip of Cambridge, but also upon the identity of the anonymous critic in "Concordia".

"What seems very queer", says the manikin of Trinity College, "is that it remained for Professor Brentano (then in Breslau, now in Strasburg) . . . to lay bare the bad faith, which had apparently dictated that quotation from Gladstone's speech in the inaugural *Address*. Mr. Karl Marx, who . . . tried to justify his quotation, had the temerity, in the deadly shifts to which Brentano's masterly attacks quickly reduced him, to claim that Mr. Gladstone tampered with the report of his speech in the 'Times' of April 17th, 1863, before it was published in *Hansard*, in order to eliminate a passage which was, indeed, compromising for the British Chancellor of the Exchequer. When Brentano demonstrated, by a detailed comparison of the texts, that the reports of the 'Times' and of *Hansard* agreed to the absolute exclusion of the meaning, impugned to Gladstone's words by a craftily isolated quotation, Marx retreated under the excuse of having no time."

This, then, was the gist of the matter! In the productive cooperative imagination of Cambridge this was the glorious reflection of Mr. Brentano's anonymous campaign in "Concordia"! That had been his attitude, and thus had he handled his sword in his "masterly attacks"—this St. George of the German Manufacturers' Association, what time Marx, the fire-breathing dragon, was expiring at his feet, quickly, and "in deadly shifts"!

We see that really this description of the struggle, this account in the Ariostian vein, was designed only to cover up the shifts of our St. George. There was no longer any mention of "added lies", of "falsification", but merely of "a craftily isolated quotation". The venue had been shifted, and St. George and his Cambridge shield-bearer had good reason for the change.

Eleanor Marx replied to Sedley Taylor in the monthly magazine "To-Day" for February 1884—the "Times" having refused to print her letter. She brought back the discussion to the only point which was really in dispute, Was the sentence in question added by Marx or was it not? Thereupon, Mr. Sedley Taylor retorted: "The question whether a certain sentence did or did not occur in Mr. Gladstone's speech, is, in my opinion, of a very inferior

importance" in the controversy between Marx and Brentano, as "compared with the question whether the quotation was made with the intention of reproducing the meaning of Mr. Gladstone or distorting it." He goes on to admit that the "Times" report "contains indeed a contradiction in words"; but, interpreting its context correctly (that is to say, in a liberal Gladstonian sense), it is quite evident what Mr. Gladstone intended to say. ("To-Day," March 1884.) The funniest thing about the matter is that our Cambridge pygmy is now careful to quote the speech, not from *Hansard* (as was the "custom" of the anonymous Brentano), but from the "Times" report, which this same Brentano had designated as "necessarily a botch". Of course, the fatal sentence is lacking in *Hansard*!

Eleanor Marx had no difficulty in shattering this argumentation in the same number of "To-Day." Either Mr. Taylor had read the controversy of 1872, or he had not. If he had read it, he had now "falsified"; not only "added", but also "subtracted". If he had not read it, it behoved him to keep his mouth shut. At any rate, it was evident that he could not dare to attempt to substantiate his friend Brentano's contention that Marx had "added a lie". On the contrary, what he now claimed was that Marx, instead of adding a lie, had suppressed an important sentence. But this same sentence is quoted on the fifth page of the inaugural *Address*, a few lines before the sentence which Marx is supposed to have falsely added. As for the contradiction in Gladstone's speech, is it not Marx himself who in *Das Kapital* (note to p. 618 of the fourth German edition, p. 721 of the present English edition) speaks of the "repeated and crying contradictions in Gladstone's budget speeches of 1863 and 1864"? Of course he does not, like Sedley Taylor, undertake to reconcile them in a spate of liberal self-satisfaction. The final summing up in Eleanor Marx's reply, runs as follows: "On the contrary, Marx has neither suppressed anything essential, nor added any lies. He rather has restored and rescued from oblivion, a certain sentence of a Gladstonian speech, which had undoubtedly been pronounced, but which somehow found its way out of *Hansard*."

Mr. Sedley Taylor, too, had now had enough of the dispute. The net upshot of this professorial imbroglio which had lasted for two decades and involved two great countries,

was that since then no one has ventured to question Marx's conscientiousness in literary matters. Henceforward we may presume that Mr. Sedley Taylor will have just as little confidence in the accuracy of Mr. Brentano's literary bulletins, as Mr. Brentano will have in the papal infallibility of *Hansard*.

FRIEDRICH ENGELS

London, June 25, 1890

## EXTRACTS FROM ENGELS' PREFACE TO THE FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATION

[Parts of this preface related only to that translation; other parts are covered by passages in the various prefaces to the German original. All the remainder is reproduced here.]

THE publication of an English version of *Das Kapital* needs no apology. On the contrary, an explanation might be expected why this English version has been delayed until now, seeing that for some years past the theories advocated in this book have been constantly referred to, attacked and defended, interpreted and misinterpreted, in the periodical press and the current literature of both England and America.

. . . . .

There is one difficulty we could not spare the reader: the use of certain terms in a sense different from what they have, not only in common life, but in ordinary political economy. But this was unavoidable. Every new aspect of a science involves a revolution in the technical terms of that science. This is best shown by chemistry, where the whole of the terminology is radically changed about once in twenty years, and where you will hardly find a single organic compound that has not gone through a whole series of different names. Political economy has generally been content to take, just as they were, the terms of commercial and industrial life, and to operate with them, entirely failing to see that by so doing, it confined itself within the narrow circle of ideas expressed by those terms. Thus, though perfectly aware that both profits and rent are but subdivisions, fragments of that unpaid part of the product which the labourer has to supply to his employer (its first appropriator, though not its ultimate exclusive owner), yet even classical political economy never went beyond the received notions of profits and rent, never examined this unpaid part of the product (called by Marx surplus product) in its integrity as a whole, and therefore never arrived at a clear comprehension, either of its origin and nature, or of the laws that regulate the subsequent distribution of its



value. Similarly all industry, not agricultural or handicraft, is indiscriminately comprised in the term of manufacture, and thereby the distinction is obliterated between two great and essentially different periods of economic history: the period of manufacture proper, based on the division of manual labour, and the period of modern industry, based on machinery. It is, however, self-evident that a theory which views modern capitalist production as a mere passing stage in the economic history of mankind, must make use of terms different from those habitual to writers who look upon that form of production as imperishable and final.

. . . . .

*Das Kapital* is often called, on the Continent, "the Bible of the working class." That the conclusions arrived at in this work are daily more and more becoming the fundamental principles of the great working-class movement, not only in Germany and Switzerland, but in France, in Holland and Belgium, in America, and even in Italy and Spain; that everywhere the working class more and more recognises, in these conclusions, the most adequate expression of its condition and of its aspirations, nobody acquainted with that movement will deny. And in England, too, the theories of Marx, even at this moment, exercise a powerful influence upon the socialist movement which is spreading in the ranks of "cultured" people no less than in those of the working class. But that is not all. The time is rapidly approaching when a thorough examination of England's economic position will impose itself as an irresistible national necessity. The working of the industrial system of this country, impossible without a constant and rapid extension of production, and therefore of markets, is coming to a dead stop. Free trade has exhausted its resources; even Manchester doubts this its quondam economic gospel. Foreign industry, rapidly developing, stares English production in the face everywhere, not only in protected, but also in neutral markets, and even on this side of the Channel. While the productive power increases in a geometric, the extension of markets proceeds at best in an arithmetic ratio. The decennial cycle of stagnation, prosperity, over-production and crisis, ever recurrent from 1825 to 1867, seems indeed to have run its course; but only to land us in the slough of despond of a permanent and

chronic depression. The sighed-for period of prosperity will not come; as often as we seem to perceive its heralding symptoms, so often do they again vanish into air. Meanwhile, each succeeding winter brings up afresh the great question, "what to do with the unemployed"; but while the number of the unemployed keeps swelling from year to year, there is nobody to answer that question; and we can almost calculate the moment when the unemployed, losing patience, will take their own fate into their own hands. Surely, at such a moment, the voice ought to be heard of a man whose whole theory is the result of a life-long study of the economic history and condition of England, and whom that study led to the conclusion that, at least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means. He certainly never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit, without a "pro-slavery rebellion," to this peaceful and legal revolution.

FREDERICK ENGELS

November 5, 1886



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As for history, Everyman's Library has been eclectic enough to choose its historians from every school in turn, including Gibbon, Grote, Finlay, Macaulay, Motley, and Prescott, while among earlier books may be noted the Venerable Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. On the classic shelf too, there is a Livy in an admirable new translation by Canon Roberts, and Cæsar, Tacitus, Thucydides, and Herodotus are not forgotten.

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daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty.

William Hazlitt's "Table Talk" may help again to show the relationship of one author to another, which is another form of the Friendship of Books. His incomparable essay, "On Going a Journey," forms a capital prelude to Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria;" and so throughout the long labyrinth of the Library shelves, one can follow the magic clue in prose or verse that leads to the hidden treasury. In that way every reader becomes his own critic and Doctor of Letters. In the same way one may turn to the Byron review in Macaulay's *Essays* as a prelude to the three volumes of Byron's own poems, remembering that the poet whom Europe loved more than England did was as Macaulay said: "the beginning, the middle and the end of all his own poetry." This brings us to the provoking reflection that it is the obvious authors and the books most easy to reprint which have been the signal successes out of the many hundreds in the series, for Everyman is distinctly proverbial in

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